

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 781. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1883.

PRICE TWOPENCE

A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER VI. FLIGHT.

LEERY seemed run to earth.

"It isn't the licking," said Bolus as he bitterly thought of the morrow; "but there's no end to this infernal thing."

"Oh, bosh!" said Leery, sitting on the table, swinging his legs freely, affecting an unconcern he didn't feel; "it'll not last long."

"I don't know what you call long," grumbled Cochin dismally. "He said he'd got through only the fifth of an inch to-day, and there's nineteen feet to these confounded Roman things."

"Five thousand years to an inch, he said; and he's only done one thousand out of five millions seven hundred thousand," piped a shrill-voiced youth named Peck, who was credited with a genius for figures.

Here was a vista of suffering!

"What rot!" exclaimed Leery contemptuously. "He must skip to the Romans. He hasn't got the things."

"He's got all those teeth, and he can call 'em any age he likes," said a saturnine Scotch youth, named Stirling, disconsolately.

"Except the horses' teeth; he can't change their age," interrupted Moffat, who was, of course, the wag.

But the joke was either not seen or not appreciated—the thing was past a joke.

"The long and the short of it is, we can't stand this thing longer, and we won't," said Bolus doggedly.

"Well, what will you do?" asked Leery.

"What will you do, you mean. It's your look-out, you know. Can't you bag

'em and burn 'em, or bury 'em, or send 'em back to Giggleswick?"

A grim joke.

"There'll be the devil to pay," objected Leery.

"You'll not have to pay it, you may swear. You always get off and let us in for it," with extreme bitterness.

"I tell you what, Bolus, you'll let yourself in for it in two minutes if you give me any more of your jaw," said Leery, leaping from the table and standing within demolishing distance of this exasperating little bantam.

Bolus would have retorted, and got licked for his pains, but for the intervention of Moffat.

"You be quiet, you little ass!" catching Bolus by the collar and thrusting him to the far side of him. "You'll get as much as you want to-morrow. Look here, Leery, there's no sense in it—can't you see yourself there's no sense in it? A fellow might stand it once in a way; but every half-holiday!"

"It was that infernal tawse" (tawse was the monstrous paper-knife). "If you hadn't gone and made a harpoon of it, and got a shilling each out of us, too!" said the Scotch youth sullenly.

"Come, we've had jaw enough," said Bolus. "It's about time it was stopped. If he won't bag the things," nodding towards Leery, "Kett must be got to throw 'em out, that's all."

There was no mistaking this threat; and, indeed, Bolus had already hinted at laying an information through Fet.

"Oh, I say, come; we'll have none of that," said a good-humoured, easy-going, phlegmatic youth named Hyslop, but known as "Porpoise." "No splitting; Leery will get us through, never fear."

The baited Leery, restored to good-

temper by this compliment to his resources, said in a conciliatory tone :

"I can shop the things safe enough, if that's all."

"But it's not all," growled the Scotch youth—a long-headed youth. "He'll stop the next holiday."

"I can do it without his suspecting us—if he's not put on to suspect us by spies and informers," returning Bolus's late nod.

"There, we've had talk enough about spying; it's only talk," said Porpoise. "No one's such an ass as to begin that game with Kett. Look here, boys, I vote we leave it to Leery."

Carried; and the house rose.

Leery did not feel the confidence he affected as to managing this business without Kett's suspecting the hand of the school in it. He revolved many plans in his mind that day; yet at night, when he went up to bed, he was still at sea. It happened, however, that one of the many battles, which were of frequent occurrence between the two dormitories, was planned for that night.

These dormitories were the merest ribbons of rooms, long and slim, separated from each other by a short and slim passage—the scene of countless and terrific battles between the Bennites and the Voges.

The Bennites, the inhabitants of Archy's room, were so called from Benn, a hero of the old time before them, who had left a name at which the school grew pale.

The origin of the name Voges is not certain. The Bennites contended that it was originally "Hogs," the "V" being the digamma (in ancient Greek an aspirate); that thus Hogs became Voges, and that "Voges" again was softened into "Voges." The Voges themselves, on the other hand, with, we must say, less plausibility, derived the word from "vogue" (fashion), so arrogating to themselves a higher social standing than their rivals.

Be this as it may, there was an immemorial feud between the two houses, which was put to the arbitrament of battle on many a stirring night. A law of honour compelled the use of one weapon only, but it was an effective weapon—the bolster supplied to each pillow, which, being filled two-thirds with bran, was good as a battle-axe, but as a thunderbolt was incomparable.

Now the Bennites, of whom were Archie, Leery, Cochin, and others, had the great good fortune of a general of genius on their side—Bolus—with the usual conse-

quence of perpetual discomfort. To-night, Bolus, either to vent the remains of his ill-temper, or to divert his thoughts from the morrow, resolved on the annihilation of the enemy. To this end he proposed an ambuscade to lie in wait on the staircase—which intersected the short passage—while he himself, accompanied only by his armour-bearer with a reserve bolster, would steal upon the foe, extinguish their candle by a discharge of his thunderbolt, and draw them on to pursue. At the narrow gate of his own city he would turn and face them, supported, like Horatius, by Lartius (Cochin) and Herminius (a youth named Sam Miggins), while the ambuscade were to rise and take the foe in their defenceless rear.

This plan was applauded by all but Leery, who, however, gave his side his moral support by going straight to bed. Bolus, having seen the main body of his forces properly disposed on the stairs, and Lartius and Herminius at the gate, set out with Archie—who though feeling very seedy, was pressed into the service as his armour-bearer—on his dim and perilous way. He crept like a panther along the passage, followed by Archie, holding all the breath he could spare; reached the unguarded gate of the enemy's city—left ajar as in profoundest peace; pushed it softly open with his left hand, while in his right was the poised thunderbolt. In another moment it dropped from his nerveless grasp, and he turned and fled as with the wings of the wind. He had heard his ambuscade rise behind him as one man, and scuttle back to their room, and he knew only too well it was Kett! Indeed, in the dark he shot bang against the principal in his precipitate retreat, and so staggered that gentleman that he recovered himself only in time to secure Archie. Him, trembling, he led back into the dormitory, sunk now in Arcadian peace. Most of the boys were in bed, lying, like alert soldiers, fast asleep, indeed, but in their clothes, ready to march at the first blast of the bugle. Bolus, we regret to say, was on his knees. He had not had time even to get to bed. Kett, having knocked Archie down with a single blow on the side of the head, glared round for other victims, but seeing Bolus buried in devotion, he had in common decency to wait till he rose. One minute passed, two, three—it seemed an hour, but Bolus clung yet to the horns of the altar, and the morning probably would have found him praying still if it

had found Kett still watching. Kett raised the siege. Turning suddenly and savagely on Archie, who stood as though paralysed, staring and blinking at him, he struck the child again, and muttering but one awful word, which in the breathless stillness the whole dormitory heard, and hearing, shuddered at—"To-morrow"—he left the room, locking the door behind him. They heard him then limp along the passage to the other dormitory, lock its door also, and stumble down the stairs, for he seemed to fall over something. Then the boys ventured to creep out of bed and undress swiftly, speaking in whispers; but before the last of them had got again into bed, Leery started up, moved by a sudden inspiration.

"By Jove! I have it, Cochin!"

"What?"

"I can shop the things to-night, and he'll never suspect us, as we're locked in."

"Bosh! with the windows barred!"

"There's the ventilator. I believe Zeb could squeeze through and unlock the door."

Poor Zeb quaked. The wretched child had gone through more and keener suffering in the last two months than many have to go through in a lifetime. The ventilator was not in the ceiling, but over the door, where it paid a double debt as a passage, not for air only, but for sound, through which Kett, when eavesdropping, could overhear what was going on in the dormitory.

"Zeb's had enough," said Cochin shortly.

"He's only to unlock the door, if he can get through. It's our one chance of shopping the things without Kett's suspecting us."

"Zeb's a brick—he'll do it," said Bolus, whose anxiety to have done with the museum for ever was intense.

"He's nothing to do," said Leery petulantly. "He's only to drop down, unlock the door, and get to bed again."

"What do you say, Pete?"

Pete was Cochin's pet-name for Archie. He knew that if Archie didn't attempt this thing he would be held up to universal odium, and, after all, there was really no risk in it.

"I'll try if you like, Cochin," in a resigned voice.

"But you're not going for the things now, with Kett on the prowl, Leery?" asked Cochin.

"No, but if Zeb turned the key now I needn't wake him up by-and-by."

This was reasonable, and considerate even.

"Well, Pete, you might try it, old man!"

"Yes, Cochin."

He hadn't much heart for the enterprise, you may be sure, but there was nothing he wouldn't attempt at the bidding of Cochin.

They feared to move a bed to the door, lest the noise might attract Kett, so a levy was made on all the mattresses, which were piled up for Leery to stand on with Archie upon his shoulders. Archie was thus raised to within reach of the ventilator, which he found he could just, and only just, squeeze through. Next moment he dropped down at the other side of the door and felt for the key.

It was gone! Kett had taken it out of the lock.

"He's taken the key!" exclaimed Archie in a faltering whisper through the keyhole.

There was a silence of consternation for a moment, broken by Leery.

"Fetch a sheet to haul him up by."

Cochin shot off for the sheet, but was met, on his return with it, by the rest hurrying back, each dragging his mattress, like ants with their pupæ, when their nest is disturbed.

"Kett!"

Poor Archie was caught like a rat in a trap, between two locked doors and the staircase, up which Kett was coming, candle in one hand, cane in the other.

The principal, on descending the stairs in the dark, stumbled over a bolster, which one of the ambuscade had dropped in the panic, and came down the rest of the flight by the run, his gouty foot seeming to tread on red-hot needles at each step. He managed to crawl into the library, and sat there for some minutes, biting his nails and grinning with impotent rage. Pain is said to quicken the faculties, and it was, perhaps, the lurid light of the fires of suffering which showed Kett in a moment, and as by an inspiration, that it was none other than the devout Bolus who nearly knocked him over in the passage. He wouldn't—he couldn't wait till to-morrow to ascertain this. He wouldn't wait even till he could put his gouty foot without torture to the ground. He waited only till he could hobble without absolutely intolerable torture; then, fetching a candle and a cane, he groaned his way up the stairs to make the dread inquisition.

Archie, as Kett approached, was so

terrified as to lose all sense of terror. A charitable stupefaction numbed every other sense but that of a kind of dull yet fascinated curiosity. It was as though he was watching and waiting for the dread death of another and lower creature—a hare in the jaws of a hound. And even this he seemed to watch in a kind of oppressive dream—in that kind of nightmare when we cannot stir foot or finger, or utter a cry. If Kett had asked him what he did, or how he got there, he couldn't have answered. But Kett was too inarticulate to say more than "You!—again!" Then followed what would be harrowing to describe.

Even Kett, when he had spent his fury on the child, was ashamed. With a hand that trembled so that he could hardly fit the key into the lock, he opened the door and then walked away.

"He's all wet!" said Cochin, as he raised Archie in his arms. "It's—it's blood!"

"Hush! he'll hear you."

"Hear me! He'll have to hear me, and others will have to hear me. He's—Leery, lift him up; I can't do it."

And poor Cochin leant against the door, sobbing with a mixed emotion of rage and pity.

"I can get up myself," said Archie. "Please don't, Cochin," picking himself up as if nothing had happened, and putting his hand soothingly on Cochin's arm. "I'm not much hurt—I'm not, indeed." And, indeed, at the moment he didn't feel as if he was.

Cochin answered only by putting his arm tenderly round the child, and half leading, half carrying him to bed.

"Strike a light, some of you, and bring the candle here," he said when he had somewhat recovered mastery over himself.

"Oh, don't, don't!" cried Archie in an agony of terror. "He'll come back."

"He! He daren't!" hissed Cochin through his clenched teeth. But Archie's terror was so wild, and almost delirious, that Cochin had to countermand his order.

"There, Pete, there—it's all right. He's not going to light it. There, lie down, young 'un," pressing his cheek, wet with a tear, against Archie's for a moment before he drew him gently back to the pillow. For his own part, Cochin was glad of the darkness, he was so unmanned—a mood much more discreditable to a boy than to a man. "Shut up, you fellows!" he said

gruffly, so reasserting his manliness. "Let him get to sleep if he can."

The fellows, who were whispering praises of Archie's supposed pluck, responded by a subdued "Good-night, Zeb," uttered in various tones of sympathy.

"Good-night, thank you," replied Archie, surprised by this universal sympathy.

In truth he didn't deserve the praise he got for pluck or even for fortitude, for his punishment was so severe that he didn't feel it much at first. For, of course, a light mental or physical shock is felt more at first than a severe one. Nature is a merciful though exacting creditor in these matters, and spreads the payment of a heavier debt over a longer time; she makes us pay all, indeed, but she has patience with us till we can pay her all. Archie was paying but the first instalment to-night, and persuaded himself, and at last persuaded even Cochin, that he wasn't much hurt. But he was badly bruised and cut, and couldn't lie in any position without pain, which seemed to increase as the long night went on. He dozed a little now and then, but such sleep as he had was so light that pain showed through it as through a veil—dimmed, but perceptible—and, worse than pain, a nightmare terror, formless, nameless, horrible, lay in wait for him in sleep, like a wild beast hid in darkness—unseen, but felt to be near and coming nearer and about to spring. Then he woke with a start, which set all his bruises throbbing together. But even on waking his pain was nothing to his terror, only less horrible to him, in so far as it was less indefinite, than his nightmare. In truth, his terror of Kett almost amounted to madness. When he woke the formless horror of the nightmare was replaced by a vision of Kett's furious face glaring at him, look where he would, or shut his eyes as he would; and when this grisly spectre fled away on the wings of darkness at the dawn, it was replaced by the dread daylight certainty of being again face to face with the man in a few hours.

The last supreme terror grew with the growing light till it possessed him like delirium. He got up and began to dress. He couldn't get his night-shirt off without tearing open the wounds it was glued to, so it had to answer for a day-shirt. When he had huddled on the rest of his clothes in a frenzied hurry, and had run as though pursued to the door of the dormitory, he stopped suddenly, turned back, stole to Cochin's bed, took out his knife—his

joy and pride—fumbled among Cochin's clothes till he found his waistcoat, slipped the knife into the pocket, crept to the head of the bed, stooped and kissed his sleeping friend—he was but a child—and made once more for the door. His thinking of Cochin at all at this moment spoke more for his love and loyalty than the present or the kiss, for he was, as we say, as one possessed. He sped headlong down the stairs, along the corridor at its foot—which led through the house to the school premises—and up the play-room stairs to the box-room. He opened his box, took out a cap, and a pair of boots, and a little bundle of letters from his mother. Having put on the cap and boots, and pocketed the letters, he stole down, slowly and cautiously now (for he was no longer in his stocking-feet, and there was method in his madness), and crept into his old refuge under the stairs. In this hole there was a little window which he had often opened to hear and see better the boys at play. It opened like a little door by lifting a latch. He opened it, squeezed through, and dropped into the play-ground. Looking up for a moment to make sure that all the windows which looked out upon it were still blind, he ran across it, climbed the wall, dropped into the field beyond, and through it reached the road. It was a wild morning, and his cap blew off as he was crossing the last wall, but he never turned aside to follow it. He ran on full speed—whither he did not know, or think about, or care, so long as it was away from Kett.

A KAFFIR TOAD.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

THE name of Wisden is grateful to very many of those who dwelt on the diamond-fields in my time. For, years before "the rush," a family so called had been settled at Annandale, half-way betwixt Hopetown and Dutoitspan. When twenty thousand diggers on one side clamorously bid for fruit and vegetables, whilst a brisk young township on the other demanded a greater allowance week by week, the farmer, a thoughtful man, divided his cares and responsibilities. He took his daughters into partnership, assigning them the dairy, poultry-yard, and garden, and, as the elders married, he brought from home new scions of his pleasant stock—girls every one. How many young ladies dwelt at Annandale about the time of my story I do not recollect, if I ever knew. Not less than

half-a-dozen certainly—all fair, young, quick of speech and smile, more or less pretty. Until supper-time, at five o'clock, they were supposed to be invisible to guests. One fitfully caught a glimpse of clean cotton skirts pinned back, slender white arms bare; one heard musical cries and girlish bursts of laughter, and snatches of song. Once I met the eldest, Grace, carrying a milk-pail and a scrubbing-brush. She was not at all embarrassed, but much too busy for chat.

The house stood behind and between two large dams, or pools, formed, not by digging, but by stopping an outflow of the natural drainage. Their banks stood fifteen feet high over against the front door, sadly blocking the outlook. In a country less wholesome, fever and ague would have made their home in Annandale. The approach led straight between these dams to a stoop, mantled with creepers, that ran along the house-front. Here, at morn and dewy eve, sat Grandfather Wisden, armed with a catapult. For shepherds and grooms, Totty servant-girls, drovers, diggers on the tramp, made rendezvous for gossip at the shallow end of the pools, where the patriarch bombarded them. To right of the building lay a garden, hedged with pomegranates, always in flower, as it seemed to us. Its walks were shaded with peach-trees; vines grew everywhere, and any quantity of grapes might be commandeered without the formality of asking. There was always sunshine and always shade at Annandale.

Appreciative visitors were never lacking at such short distance from the fields. All the hospitable Wisden asked was a note of introduction from some person of responsibility, which successful diggers obtained with ease. Never did we hear of a guest misbehaving, drunken or quarrelsome as he might be in camp. Nearly all agreed in respectful adoration of one or other of the young ladies.

Grace was reckoned prettiest and admitted cleverest of the bevy. Among her worshippers I must name Skinner, of the Colesberg Kopje—"Bang Skinner," we called him—and Hutchinson. The former was a loud-laughing, fresh-coloured, happy sort of fellow, generally liked of men, and a favourite declared of the gods. He knew nothing of diamonds when he came among us, and he never learned a morsel. It was not necessary. Two men worked a hole, nine feet by four, adjoining my claim.

The day after Bang's arrival at the Colesberg Kopje he fell in with them, and straightway bought their patch for nine hundred pounds, the sum remaining out of a thousand which his kinsfolk had raised—perhaps to get rid of him. After paying the registration-dues and the first month's licence, he had not a farthing left, and the sellers stood him breakfast. It was Saturday, when no digger works. To amuse himself, Bang borrowed a pick and pail. What he brought to bank at dusk he had no precise idea, but the diamond-koopers did not suspect his ignorance. At dinner that night, in glee rather than triumph, the fellow showed us a roll of bank-notes—just nine hundred pounds they represented! Forthwith he took position in the set that called a six-carat stone a "tizzy."

Hutchinson I had known at home, when he was a subaltern in a Lancer regiment. What follies or misfortunes drove him into our society I have forgotten, but he did not find luck there. After working like a mole on Bultfontein, his health was broken by those ills the unsuccessful digger cannot escape—filth, exposure, despair, unwholesome living. Hutchinson fell back on the deserted river-camps. Pleasant scenery they gave him, and this at first was medicine for a lad who came from the sweltering, lime-white, thirsty veldt. But the fare is harder; the work has its own attendant miseries, river-boil and rheumatism, more painful if less deadly than those of dry digging. When I left the fields, eighteen months later, Hutchinson had not seen a diamond of his own—but what hideous heaps belonging to other people!

So far as we disinterested ones could judge, Grace did not care for either in especial. Hutchinson had advantages, however, besides good looks and pleasant manner. He came from the neighbourhood of Wisden's birthplace, and he brought an introduction very different to those supplied by Cape Town bankers and Port Elizabeth wool-dealers. Grace remembered nothing of the old country, but perhaps she loved it none the less for that. The elder generation of the family were enthusiastic in welcome, and Hutchinson constantly rode over until I sold my horses, going home. Then he starved for a month to economise the money for a coach-ticket to Hopetown, and tramped to Annandale from the nearest point on the high road. Such eccentricity might not cause suspicion

once, but it could not be repeated; the man who walks fifteen miles across the veldt must be mad or in love—and miserably poor anyhow. After three blissful days, Wisden lent him a horse for the back journey. Some weeks later Hutchinson found a Boer who passed Annandale, and in his waggon got a lift, paying for it by making himself useful with a drove of sheep. Grace was absent, visiting a sister! After that disappointment—how hard nobody can tell who has not been in love, and penniless, and ill, and despairing—he gave up. What good, after all, to torment oneself for a pleasure that turned to pain in the enjoyment! Miss Wisden did not care for him.

To work single-handed on the river is mere tempting of the demon rheumatism. The bucket must be filled knee-deep in the stream, the cradle must be sluiced, and then, dripping from head to foot, the digger must seat himself at the sorting-board. But Hutchinson had no mate. A Kaffir he kept, such a poverty-stricken wretch as his means could support for a little while longer. Very ugly and stupid was this poor fellow, distinguished from all young blacks I ever saw by the irregularity and badness of his teeth. I could not describe the unpleasant oddity of Stump's appearance when, opening his huge lips to laugh, he showed jaws gapped and discoloured. But Stump was attached to the master he had served two years, and Hutchinson valued his dumb friendship. Unlucky master and scarecrow man were not ill-matched, people said. Day after day, month after month, their record of failure dragged its miserable length along. The time was now hourly approaching when Hutchinson's last penny would be spent, and he must lie down to die. He would not return to the pitiless, feverish, dry diggings. Better to starve here in his ragged tent beneath the murmuring trees. To that point had the wasting of sickness brought him.

He sat at his table by the river brink, and sorted hopelessly. Stump brought a dripping-pail from the shallow, poured it clashing in the cradle, rocked and rocked, threw out successive trays, and emptied the residuum, wet and glistening, on his master's board. Lovely pebbles were there, of every hue saving the blurred white of the river diamond. Hutchinson worked mechanically, scraping from the margin of the heap, smoothing the shingle, and dropping it over the edge, between his

knees. Meanwhile eyes and thoughts wandered.

Gems are not found by such a method as this, but the chances of diamond-digging are endless. On a certain afternoon, as Hutchinson listlessly watched his boy throw out the trays, he saw something that made his heart leap. In the next pulse it sickened—for when did luck visit that claim? But he rose, found the object, stared gasping, hugged it and ran into a glint of sunshine. A diamond at last, of macle shape, weighing some twenty carats!

Stump showed his joy by dancing, whirling, and howling, with an awful frown upon his brow. When Hutchinson came to himself, he resolved to tramp to Pniel, whence a coach or a post-cart would carry him to Hopetown. Stump he left in charge of the ragged tent, the worthless clothes and tools, with a fortnight's store of mealies, and a shilling to buy offal for the weekly feast. Forthwith Hutchinson started.

Before emerging from the narrow fringe of trees that borders the Vaal river, he came upon a waggon of singular appearance. In place of tilt it had a roof and panelled walls, adorned with pictures of the most brilliant colouring. Wild beasts were there depicted alternately with black warriors and white beauties, alike arrayed in feathers and nothing else. These works of art had suffered shockingly from sunshine, and whirling sand, and thorns of the bush. By a little tent alongside a huge Boer sat smoking, and a bush-boy—dwarfed, naked, misshapen—restlessly pried about. Everything in the small camp declared the Kaffir trader returning homewards.

In ten minutes more Hutchinson saw the blazing veldt outspread, a grey expanse barred with stripes of white and yellow blossom in the near distance, fading out of sight. Where the horizon should be, stretched pools of mirage. Flat-topped hills hung above them, like stains in the pallid sky. No object in the scene stood out, excepting a man's own shadow. Smooth as a floor the waste appeared, though each of those shining bars marked the crest of a wave invisible. Now and again, though no wind blew, the sand lifted, whirled up to form a little dusky pillar, danced a few yards, and dropped. A melancholy land indeed to traverse in the glare of African summer!

For the comprehension of those who have neither digger's nor trader's experience, I

must tell what is a "macle" stone. This form of diamond, unusual but not rare, is in fact a double triangle, the one lying smoothly and exactly on the other, adhering firmly; a slight blow on the line of junction will make them fly apart. A large macle, unflawed, is commonly worth more than a single crystal of the same weight, since there is small waste in cutting it. Diggers do not like this form, however. Flat on top and bottom, a macle is much more easily concealed by a dishonest servant than is the plumper stone.

Four mounted Kaffirs overtook Hutchinson before he had gone far, and paused at his hail. They were Dutch-speaking Battapins, of Jantje's Kraal, rough as burly, but not ill-natured. For a shilling they gave him a mount on one of the led horses, and he reached Jardine's hotel by nine o'clock. Forty-eight hours afterwards his prize was sold to Schlessinger, of Hope-town, for two hundred pounds. He bought some clothes, hired a horse, and once more dismounted at Annandale.

The Wisden family were so delighted to see him, so shocked at his pallor and thinness, so anxious that he should remain till his strength was quite restored, that Hutchinson reproached himself for certain doubts and hesitations. Within five minutes of arrival he had made up his mind to tell Grace how he loved her. The young man was not a fool. He knew that two thousand pounds would hardly justify pretension to Miss Wisden's hand, and he had less than a tithe of that sum. But his luck had broken. If Grace would only hear him, and wait a few months, he would outshine Skinner in the display of gems which was often laid upon the table after supper.

That favourite of fortune had been staying a week at Annandale, but he left early on the second day after Hutchinson arrived. During that time no opportunity arose to speak with Grace, and another day passed by, happily, but anxiously. Next morning the young man went out before breakfast to shoot plovers; Wisden met him on the stoop returning, and took his arm.

"My dear boy," said he, "did you yourself find that macle stone you told us of?"

"Yes, in my own claim. Why?"

"I was sure you said so. Well, Schlessinger has brought a Dutchman who swears that he found it, the very same diamond, on Monday evening, and it was stolen from his tent that night."

"Confound his impudence! Where is he?"

"Keep your temper, my boy. These unfortunate mistakes will occur sometimes."

But it was too much that his single stroke of fortune should be suspected thus. Hutchinson went in raging. In the boer he recognised the owner of that ornamental waggon left behind at the river.

"What's all this, Schlessinger?" he asked roughly.

"I tell you flat, sir, Mr. de Ruyter is my old friend and client. He outspanned near your claim on Monday, with his pack of Kaffir produce. In evening time he washed some stuff, just for pleasure, and he found a macle. Mr. de Ruyter is a trader, not prudent. He showed the stone in camp, and so that night his tent was cut, and his belt commandeered. After a fuss Mr. de Ruyter comes to me at Hopetown, and tells me. Then I think it right to show him the diamond I bought from you. So here we are. That's all my say."

"I swear to him," the big Dutchman roared, "by his broke brads un' scrats."

"How dare you ask me for an explanation of this cock-and-bull story, Schlessinger? You know that nine macles in ten have their angles broken, and all are scratched in the river."

"That's as may be!" he replied with warmth. "Mr. de Ruyter says your boy was creeping round his tent."

"Ya! Mine bush-boy see thy dom Kaffir skellum!"

"Why didn't you bring him along if you suspect him?"

"Dom! Skellum not to catch. Look here, man, I take my diamond!"

"Find it and welcome. But if either of you says another word I'll knock your heads together."

Wisden gripped his young friend just in time.

"Make allowances," said he. "These gentlemen are honest, and one of them has been wronged. When did you find your stone?"

"I am ashamed to offer an explanation, sir. At what hour did you find yours, De Ruyter?"

"To sundown."

"And you lost it after going to bed, at nine o'clock, say. At ten o'clock, Mr. Wisden, I reached Jardine's hotel, in Pniel, as Jardine and twenty men in the bar will testify."

"I suppose you don't want a stronger alibi than that?" asked Wisden.

"Not at all!" said Schlessinger hastily; "I apologise, sir. As matter of form we will enquire. Good-morning, gentlemen. Where there's no ill-will there should be no grudge. Mr. Hutchinson, happy to do business with you at any time." He departed, dragging out Mr. de Ruyter, who wanted, with many oaths, to know why and how matters were thus settled. Arguing in high and low German the pair rode off.

"No worse than a droll incident so far as you are concerned," said Wisden. "But I should be almost afraid the Dutchman was not quite out."

"I won't suspect Stump, sir. He has stood by me like an honest man through hard times—terribly hard times. I should begin to fear for myself almost if Stump went wrong."

"Well, I didn't understand that the bush-boy had seen the theft. Still, those imps are born spies and detectives. I should look up Stump."

"We don't even know that De Ruyter ever had a diamond. The camps will roar from Gong Gong to New Rush when they hear of his broke brads and scrats."

They had wandered into the garden, and seated themselves upon a bench. White arms round his neck, a fresh face pressed to his, obstructed Wisden's reply.

"Good-morning, father; good-morning, Mr. Hutchinson. Did you intend those plovers for any one in particular? If so, it was injudicious to leave them about in such a hungry house as this."

"I laid them on the stoop for our general benefit," said he.

"Then you won't suspect me of stealing them? Oh yes, father, I have been listening at the window. Good girls don't listen, which is almost a pity sometimes. For I can tell you something, Mr. Hutchinson. Stump was here yesterday morning."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Oh yes; I saw him from my window while I dressed, talking to Mr. Skinner's groom. If you doubt me, ask father."

This was a little household saying which imputed that Wisden would always back his daughter Grace. He said now:

"She may be wrong, Hutchinson, but if it were my own case, I should believe her right until the contrary was proved."

"It's very strange, certainly. Stump has no business here, and that he should stop twenty-four hours without communicating with me, beats all explanation."

"I meant to tell you yesterday, but I

forgot," Grace continued; "Stump walked away from the dam with Sinclair, and I've not seen him since. But we'll ask the Totty girls."

She ran away, eager and graceful as Iris. The South African household is terribly observant within its purview. Grace soon came back with a whole series of reports. The toothless Kaffir was resting at the dam when the servant-girls turned out. Whilst they chatted with him, Sinclair arrived with his master's horses, and the men met like old acquaintances. An hour afterwards Stump was seen going towards Pniel alone.

After thinking over this odd story, Hutchinson appealed to Grace; Wisden had been called away. She replied:

"My opinion is, that in justice to all parties, you should find Stump."

"I will start to-morrow."

"I should start to-day."

"It is so hard to break up one's holiday. You cannot know how despairingly I have pictured this bright scene, and—and your bright face—hour by hour, week after week."

"But you will come back in three days," she answered, leading him towards the house, "with an easy mind, to stay as long as you please. Father and everyone will be sorry to see you go."

"You also?"

"As much as any of your friends."

"I want more than friendship from you, Grace. It was you I dreamed of, you who made the place so bright, you who make it brighter even than I fancied."

"What is the use of this, Mr. Hutchinson?" she asked, looking at him steadily, not severely.

"No use if it annoys you. If you say that, I will never speak of it again."

"I asked what is the use; if you had annoyed me I should have spoken differently. Working girls learn that it is no use to talk of things that can never be, even though one might like it. And I do not like to hear you speak in this tone, Mr. Hutchinson."

"Because it's no use? Oh, tell me that. Could you bear to hear it if things were otherwise?"

"You have no right to ask. But I will answer in perfect frankness and truth that I do not know. Don't misunderstand. If you were rich, I should have to think and observe, and to put questions to myself which there is no need for now, and which I have certainly not thought of."

"Because I am poor?" he said bitterly.

"Because you never used this tone before."

"But I do now."

"And now I say there is no need to think before replying." She resolutely walked into the house.

All through breakfast Hutchinson turned these words over, while the merry girls pretended to believe that conscience was preying on him. Grace had spoken sensibly from the point of view she chose. But if prudence were the first question, he had much better have addressed her father. So he did. Wisden listened in some distress, but greater astonishment. He gently hinted that the lover had no prospects; then, more strongly, that Grace's fortune was not small; at length, when Hutchinson persisted, that Skinner was the destined husband.

"I don't believe it! That is—— I beg your pardon, sir. Miss Wisden would not have answered as she did, if she meant to marry anyone at present."

"I like you, my boy," said the father grimly, "but confound your impudence! So you've been talking to Grace? Well, I can venture to stand by my daughter's words."

"They came to this, sir, as I understood, that if I were rich she might think of it."

"Very proper; but not put in those words, I think. No; I supposed not. Well, what Grace says, I stick to. You are a good young fellow, but you aren't rich; Skinner is a good young fellow, and he is rich; that's how the matter stands! Now, you can't alter that, can you? Then what's the good of talk that may end in a quarrel, which would deeply grieve us all?"

No good, if such were the feelings appealed to. Very wretched was Hutchinson as he rode away at noon.

IN THE GOLDEN GLOW.

Lo! broken up and melted is the sky
Into an ocean of immensity,
Where golden islands swim in golden light
Too vast and shining-clear for mortal sight;

And day is ebbing far; but, ere it goes,
All the deep passion of its splendour flows
About thy beauty in a rolling tide
Straight from heaven's gates, and thou art glorified.

Oh, that the burning sunset could but speak
Those burning thoughts for which all words are weak;

Could tell how my whole love to thee is given,
Quenchless and pure as very fire from heaven!

Ah! lift the wonders of that amber hair,
And turn on me thine eyes, oh, sweet and fair!
And let their pity meet the love in mine—
Pity and love akin, and both divine!

A BOARDING-HOUSE ROMANCE.

A STORY IN ELEVEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VIII.

IF Trevelyan had felt downcast at the small progress he had made in his love-affair thus far, even his American ideas of speed might have been satisfied with the rapid headway he made during the first week of Gräfin Rolandseck's convalescence.

Gabrielle came down to dinner every evening, and soon began to feel that her enjoyment was increased in no small measure by the unspoken welcome which always shone out of Mr. Trevelyan's eyes, and by the consciousness that he had a high opinion of her character and understanding.

The better she knew him the more she learned to appreciate his powers of mind, until by degrees her proud toleration of him as an American and a Radical had changed into respect for a mental superior, and Trevelyan's good opinion, which she would at first have thought worth no more than his bad one, had become a thing to be desired—an honour.

They had plenty of subjects of conversation in common now, for Trevelyan had assured her that her knowledge of English could not be considered complete until she had some acquaintance with American literature, and though secretly sceptical, common politeness forbade Gabrielle to refuse his offer of the loan of a volume of Emerson's Essays. In a few days Mr. Trevelyan had the gratification of hearing that she was so agreeably surprised by that author as to be anxious to read anything more of his that she could meet with.

A day soon came when, leaning upon her daughter's arm, Gräfin Rolandseck came among the company once more. It was not till then that Trevelyan realised how much ground he had gained with Gabrielle in her absence, but he realised something less agreeable at the same time—with what chilling haughtiness the old Gräfin treated him, and how her conduct seemed to affect Gabrielle to a certain degree. It was as though she had suddenly begun to fear that she had been a little too unreserved in her intercourse with the American. The change in her manner was very slight, but there was a change, though it escaped all eyes but Trevelyan's. Even Gustel did not remark it, who, in her character of a "woman scorned" and naturally sighing for revenge, would have scored a little triumph if she had done so.

It should be said that Gustel Sommer-rock's feelings with regard to Mr. Trevelyan had lately undergone a violent revulsion; she believed that she now despised and hated him, and she attributed her being so averse to a marriage between him and Gräfin Gabrielle solely to her solicitude for that young lady's welfare.

When dinner was over, Gräfin Rolandseck was gracious enough to accept the offer of Mr. Trevelyan's arm upstairs. She relinquished it with a bow when they reached the top, and took her daughter's along the passage. She had not gone many steps before, hearing her name spoken, she looked round.

"It is only Gustel with a servant," explained Gabrielle, who recognised the voices.

But Gräfin Rolandseck had suddenly stopped in her walk, and turned towards her daughter with such surprise and indignation in her face that Gabrielle turned instinctively, wondering what could have happened of such a dreadful nature in so short a time.

Mr. Trevelyan was the only person behind them, he was hastening to his room. Their eyes met, and to her surprise the American looked oddly discomfited.

When they entered their own room, Gabrielle's first words were:

"How odd of Mr. Trevelyan, mother."

"Odd? Disgraceful, you mean! Of course we can have no idea whose the handkerchief may be, but to kiss it in that manner in a public passage is ill-bred and ridiculous to a degree. Pray whom may he be in love with—Gustel, or one of the maids?"

"What, mother! Kissing a handkerchief?" exclaimed Gabrielle with mingled incredulity and scorn, and with a secret unreasonable feeling of being personally slighted by such an act.

"Kissing a handkerchief, my dear. Perhaps you had better feel if you have yours about you," she added with a satirical smile.

"Mother!" cried Gabrielle indignantly. She put her hand into her pocket to prove the utter absurdity of the suggestion, but she took it out slowly with a very blank expression. She did not say anything.

Nor did Gräfin Rolandseck; she only curled her lip, and looked out of the window, deep mortification stamped upon her face. In a little time she turned and looked sympathisingly at her daughter.

"Never mind, my child; don't dwell upon the insult; such things will happen in travelling. You can buy everything but select society. The matter is not worth a second thought; we have simply to leave to-morrow or next day, and meantime we can keep to our rooms."

"Yes; since this has happened we had better go," said Gabrielle slowly.

"You might study the guide at once, dear. There are places in the Tyrol that you want to see. I will go anywhere you like, provided that we can make the journey by easy stages."

Gabrielle took up a Baedeker in obedience to her mother, but it was not of the Austrian Tyrol that she was thinking—she was thinking that trivial as that one action was in itself, perhaps Trevelyan really cared for her. On looking back she recalled things in his conduct that made her think he did, and struggle against the conviction as she might, it was breaking in upon her that he was a man for whom she could have learned to care in return, had her fate permitted it.

As it was, her mother was right, they must stay here no longer. Nevertheless, for the first time these sudden marching orders jarred upon her painfully; she feared that this would be no common change, but an uprooting of her heart.

George Trevelyan was pacing up and down his room in a state of bitter chagrin.

He was reflecting that the folly of a moment had in all probability ruined his whole future. He knew that he had betrayed himself in a manner that could not fail to tell very greatly to his disadvantage, even under circumstances much more favourable than his own. That look of Gräfin Rolandseck's had inspired him with some of the contempt for himself that it expressed on her part. What could have possessed him to act like such a fool? he asked himself in blank wonder. He spent the greater part of the night in vainly endeavouring to solve the problem, and when at last he threw himself on his bed it continued to haunt him in dreams.

It was so late when he entered the dining-room the next morning that everyone had already breakfasted, and the room was deserted until Frau Sommerrock came in to make his coffee.

"You will have your old room again very soon, Herr Trevelyan," she said pleasantly as she handed him his tea-cup, "Gräfin Rolandseck has just been telling

me that she is suddenly called away. She leaves to-morrow."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Trevelyan indifferently, but he fixed his eyes on Frau Sommerrock's face rather curiously. After a short silence he spoke again.

"I shall not be in for dinner this evening, madame. I mean to see that pretty bit of the lake you were speaking about yesterday."

"You could not have a better day for it, and I am sure you will enjoy the view; but we shall miss you very much at dinner, for we shall not have Gräfin Rolandseck and her daughter with us. They will be too busy with their packing to come down this evening."

Trevelyan, under the impression that he was expected to make some remark on receipt of this intelligence, was about to jerk out an "Oh!" when he reflected that it was not absolutely necessary to show that the news affected him particularly.

He rose from the table very soon, the two facts he had learned forming a substantial meal in themselves, and being too difficult of digestion to leave an appetite for anything else.

According to his custom he went out immediately.

"Not coming down to dinner to-night, and going away for good to-morrow!"

He said the words over and over until they ceased to convey a meaning to him. A sudden hatred of the haughty old Gräfin who had cast that annihilating glance at him yesterday, took possession of him. He thought over the weak points in her thin armour of rank sneeringly, and relieved his mind by striking arrows of satire into their centres. Doing so gave him a savage pleasure at the moment, but he soon reflected that it was a waste of energy to go into such a heat about an old lady whose good or bad opinion would have been a matter of profound indifference to him, but for the fact of her being Gabrielle's guardian, and as such having almost absolute power over her—and him.

There was the rub!

For one moment he was beaten back by the conviction that with this woman against him success would be impossible—simply impossible. But a little breathing time, and his energetic mind armed itself anew for the conflict.

He reflected deeply. At length he threw his head back as if shaking off something. His lips were set firmly, there was a suppressed fire in his eye, a more than usual firmness about his mouth.

In a nutshell the result of his reflection was this:

"Come what may, I will see her and tell her that I love her before she leaves this house. I will take No from no lips but hers, and not from hers unless I see that she does not care for me."

He walked back to the house, went up to his room, drew a chair close to the door, and seated himself upon it. The handle was in his hand, Gräfin Rolandseck's door could not open without his hearing it. When it did so he meant to open his own, and if Gabrielle were in the passage to speak to her; it was his only possible chance of seeing her alone.

He waited an hour without any result, then he heard the jingle of plates and glasses in the passage, and knew that luncheon was being carried in. As he had no idea of making a scene before the servants, he took up a book with the intention of allowing them a full hour by his watch for the meal, and its consequences in the way of domestic attendance.

Directly the hour was over—it had seemed like three ordinary ones—he became alert again, but so long a time elapsed without any sound issuing from the room opposite that if he had not been an American he would have begun to despair; as it was, he merely reminded himself that he must be now exactly so many hours nearer the supreme moment of meeting.

Half-past five.

No sound from the room opposite, but much hurrying along the passage on the part of people going to their rooms to dress for dinner.

"I have only been here five hours and a half," he murmured satirically, as he began to pace up and down the room for a change.

At last the dinner-gong sounded. The summons inspired him with such new hope that he once more put his hand on the handle, and even half-turned it to be ready to pounce upon his prey instantly when the right moment arrived.

He heard much rustling of dresses and descending of the stairs; a little interval of silence followed, only broken by one or two stragglers hurrying past.

Not another sound till some ten minutes later, when, positively, the door opposite was softly opened. There was a moment's pause before it was closed, and Trevelyan had the sense to keep quiet during that moment.

He now opened his as softly.

Yes! There she was, half-a-dozen steps in advance of him, in hat and gloves, walking quietly but quickly down the passage. In a moment he was at her side.

"Gräfin!"

—She turned with the faintest possible start, and looked at him. Her calm questioning gaze betrayed neither surprise nor excitement.

"Mr. Trevelyan!"

Both had complete command over their features, neither complete command over their voices.

"Forgive me for my madness yesterday!"

"I beg your pardon—for what?"

"For loving you. I have not to apologise only for having taken an unwarrantable liberty, or for having made a fool of myself yesterday; my sin consists in thinking you the noblest and best of women, in—"

"Excuse me, Mr. Trev—"

"Had you never a dim suspicion that I loved you? It was only with great difficulty that I managed to keep silence for so long, but I wanted to gain the Frau Gräfin's confidence, and if possible, her friendship, before broaching the subject that was upon my mind night and day. You know what an unlucky chance betrayed me yesterday. If it offended you I entreat your forgiveness, Gabrielle. I was carried away by my feelings for one moment; for the first time I held something of yours—of your very own—in my hand. What wonder if I kissed it?"

"For what happened yesterday, Mr. Trevelyan—though it was unnecessary to allude to such a trifle—you have my full pardon. With regard to the rest I can only beg you to forget that you have spoken, as I will. It is idle to pursue the subject. You and I are mere chance acquaintances of a few weeks, and it is impossible that we should ever become more. Excuse my going, I have business in the town;" and she stepped forward.

Trevelyan stepped forward too.

"That is so. We are chance acquaintances. Nothing less than a very strange chance could have brought us two together from our different quarters of the globe. Is it not a still stranger chance that in spite of difference of nationality, difference of education, difference of thought, our hearts should respond to each other as they do? What is your theory of chance, Gabrielle? Tell it me. Do you agree with Pope that it is 'Direction that we cannot see'?"

"It would be vain to argue that part of the subject, Mr. Trevelyan, since it could not affect my decision in any way. You and I can never be more to each other than we have been; you only pain me uselessly by pursuing the subject. Pray take my answer and let me go. I am not speaking under excitement, or on the mere impulse of the moment; I shall not change my mind."

"You mean you dislike me? You could never learn to care for me? You are unspeakably dear to me, it will cost me a life's happiness and peace of mind to have to give you up, yet you will not think over the subject even out of compassion? You think me presumptuous, no doubt?"

"I—I would not say a word that could hurt your feelings, Mr. Trevelyan, and so far from considering you presumptuous, I regard your preference as an honour, but it is not the less an honour that I cannot accept."

"Gabrielle, consider! My heart, my whole future are at your feet, do not trample upon them. I was contented and happy until I saw you that first morning you came to this place. You never knew, but I saw you in a carriage as you were driving from the station, and I loved you from that moment. From that day the old calm, self-satisfied existence was over, there remained only two extremes for me—happiness beyond my wildest dreams, or misery equally great. I put my destiny into your hands at this moment, Gabrielle, and I will abide by your sentence—only be merciful. Give me a chance—at least, stay here, and let me see more of you on the old terms, or let me follow you where you are going. I will promise not to press my suit for two, four, six months if you like, and you shall be perfectly free to reject me if I cannot make you care for me just a little before then. Do this!"

She drew a long breath before she could answer. To have saved her life she could not have repressed that one sign as she saw the gates of paradise opening before her, and yet knew that she might never enter the golden land.

"Mr. Trevelyan, I cannot do even that; you and I must see each other no more."

There was a pause.

She would have left him, and he would hardly have tried to stop her this time, but she had not strength enough to move.

When Trevelyan spoke it was in a different tone, cold and measured.

"I could almost believe that I am greatly deceived in you, Gräfin Rolandseck. You condemn a man to despair too lightly for such a character as I take yours to be. You know enough of life to understand what it must mean to break the heart of a man of my age—a boy's may be mended, a man's can never be. Keep to your decision and you kill all that is best in me to-day. Coquettes and fools do such things every day, because they are too callous or too shallow to care what they are doing, but that you should act so does surprise me."

"Oh, say no more, say no more, Mr. Trevelyan! Each word stabs me to the heart, and it was sore enough before. Forgive me for all that I have brought upon you. Forgive me, and, if you can, forget me; if you cannot, hate me, if that will comfort you. Set me down as a heartless coquette, only do not—do not break your heart because of me, nor let a life full of such noble promise be blighted by my influence. If you want revenge, take it in the knowledge that you have wrung my heart—that I condemn myself to greater unhappiness than that to which I condemn you, when I repeat that I am powerless to alter my decision."

"You love someone else?"

"Oh no, no!"

The eager reproachful tone of the denial, the involuntary glance that met his own with the clearness and steadiness of truth itself, raised his sinking spirits, and set his heart pulsing madly with a sudden thrill of joy.

"Circumstances perhaps decree this course, not inclination alone?"

She nodded a mute assent.

"My difference of rank may possibly—?"

"I am not so little as that. You are more than my equal in every respect, I have not seen so much of you without learning that."

"Then perhaps——"

But she was hurrying down the passage, and had already gained the staircase.

So the objection lay outside himself at any rate.

Trevelyan could breathe freely again. Some great difficulty evidently existed, but he determined that no difficulty, short of a husband already upon the scene, should prove insurmountable.

GUESSES.

FEW things are more tempting, few things are more dangerous, than the study of etymology. Properly understood and applied, its rules often lead to important discoveries, throwing light upon not only the history of families and of places, but even of nations and religions. But the rules are sharp and edged tools, and one must be taught to handle them. This is not easily understood. There may be necessary preparation for the study of this or that science, it is said; but surely if I have lived all my days in a place, I am more likely to know the meaning of its name by the application of common-sense than is a student working in a distant library, who has never been within the county, and does not know whether the population is fifty or five hundred. Undoubtedly, local knowledge is often of great service to the word-hunter, but local knowledge and common-sense, if alone relied upon, are but feeble weapons. The probable derivation, or, at least, the apparent derivation, is almost always not the true derivation, and even knowledge of the history of language is not always sufficient to preserve accomplished philologists from falling into the trap. Thus, a living writer pointed lately to the name *Saltaire*. Here, he said, is evidence for the world that salt was once worked there. Nothing, of course, could be worse as a guess. *Saltaire* was designed, built, and named by Sir Titus Salt as a residence for his workpeople, and the name indicates at once the founder and the adjacent river.

The name "*Windsor*" has been a favourite sport of guessers. First, Mr. Fergusson has told us, it was supposed to indicate that the "wind is sore," since *Windsor* is somewhat exposed. Next, it was presumed that, from a cry of "*Wind us o'er*," from those anxious to cross a ferry, the place got its name. Again, reference was made to old writers, and the ancient name *Windelsora* was made to yield "*winding shore*." It is possible that the real derivation is simply *Windel's* (query, *Vandal's*) shore—i.e. a landing-place.

The English have, however, by no means a monopoly of guesses. Here is one from the stolid *Fatherland*. Everyone knows that when the knight *Tannhäuser* followed the *Lady Venus*, it was into the *Hörselberg* that she led him. Thuringian tradition says that from a cave in the *Hörselberg*

admittance was had to Purgatory, and that wild shrieks rang out over those still forests which lie around. The natural local derivation of *Hörsel*, therefore, was "*Höre! die seele!*"—"Hear! the souls!"

Sometimes the faulty derivation leads to odd modern name-forms. A part of *Glasgow* is now known as the *Dovehill*; when this name was first used we have not been able to ascertain, but it must have been within very recent years. It used to be called, and is still called by the working classes, "*the Doo-hill*." *Doo* is dove or pigeon, and no doubt the authorities thought to exercise *doo hill* into *Dove-hill* was a very satisfactory piece of work. Unfortunately neither the name nor the place ever had anything to do with doves. For the real explanation we have to go a long way back. *Joceline*, who wrote the life of *St. Kentigern*, speaks of the saint as sitting "*super lapidem in supercilio montis vocabulo Gwleth*." Tradition preserved the story by calling the elevation the *Dew-hill*, or, popularly, the *Doo-hill*. In the local derivation all trace is lost of the ancient tradition which gave the place the honour of being the seat of *Kentigern*.

The name *Glasgow* has itself severely suffered at the hands of etymologists. It has been made out to mean the dark valley, the gray smith, the eloquent voice, the blue water, the green field, the house of devotion—twenty derivations at least are known to us, all chiefly guesses of the wildest description. Perhaps the climax of absurdity is reached when an attempt is made to regard "*Glas*" as a contraction of "*Gelass*," itself supposed to be a contraction of *Gelassen*, giving the result that *Glasgow* means an old road or forsaken district; yet this derivation has been seriously maintained. The usual way in which local etymologists work, not alone in England, is this. They take a name as it stands in modern spelling; then they strive to compare with it any word or words in any known language which has a similar sound in pronunciation; if the result be not too preposterous the necessary legend to connect name and derivation has to be sought for. The word *Glasgow* remotely resembles two Gaelic words meaning "*gray smith*," and both *M'Ure*, the first historian of *Glasgow*, and *Principal McFarlan*, who wrote the notice of *Glasgow* for the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, gravely offer this derivation. But why *gray smith*? The answer is, "because some celebrated smith may have lived here in early times!" Another in-

genious guess, which it is difficult to regard seriously, is that the Glasgow coat-of-arms suggested to the French that the city should be called *Ville d'escu* and *Ville de l'escu*, "town of the shield." *Glesgu*, it should be explained, is the primitive name of Glasgow according to Joceline. To this etymologist it does not seem to have occurred that Glasgow had no arms when Kentigern built his wattled shed, that modern French was not spoken in the days of Joceline, and that there is no reason why the Cumbrians of the Clyde valley should have gone to a foreign language for the name of their own saint. The conclusion of the argument must be given, for it is pregnant with meaning for guessers elsewhere: "The 'de,' through similarity of sound, becoming 'a,' the phrase would be written 'Glescu,' and so on till it became 'Glasgow.'" This is a fair match for the story that Hellas correctly is "Hill-as," and means that you can't go a mile without coming to a hill; or that it is derived from the name of her, whose face

Launched a thousand ships,
And burned the topless towers of Ilium.

It would be out of place here to tell the difficulties that surround the derivation of Glasgow, but it may shortly be said that we agree with Professor Rhys, in regarding at least the present name, Glasgow, as indicating the name of Kentigern, by his folk-name, *In Glas Chu*, the Greyhound. Before the arrival of Kentigern, it is quite possible, as Mr. Macgeorge has supposed, that the present site of Glasgow was known as the Green Place, or the Dear Green Place.

Only those who have painfully studied local etymology can thoroughly appreciate a remark of Mr. Peile: "In any language—our own or that of others—until we know the history of a word, and till we know the variations of sound which distinguish that language from other languages, every explanation we give of the word is a guess, and much more likely to be a wrong guess than a right one." In Sussex, bronchitis is said to be called the "brown crisis," and typhus is sometimes known as "titus fever." These are obvious guesses, but they are not a whit more absurd than much which passes for place-name etymology.

No one can write upon this subject without feeling that he is on dangerous ground. If the engineer be not hoist by his own petard, he may easily fall into one of his own pits. There are snares for the unwary in all directions, and who can

be sure that he is always in the right path? It is perilous work to walk always with a lantern; there is but one consolation—how much worse would it be to walk in the dark!

The Americans in their determination to claim a distinct nationality have made sad havoc of the names of some of the immigrants, more especially of German immigrants. Guesswork of a strictly practical kind is here seen at work. Suppose a native of *Bürgerthal*, and known as *Bürgerthaler*, i.e. a dweller in *Bürgerthal*, goes to America, how is he to make his somewhat clumsy name sound more harmonious? By translation, is the specious answer. Examine *Bürgerthaler*; the ending suggests money—*thaler*; and this may be rendered, for the sake of familiarity, "dollar." Thus, as the learned author of *Surnames as a Science* has told us, *Mühlthaler*, becomes *Muldollar*, *Bernthaler* becomes *Barndollar*, and *Käsenenthaler* becomes *Cashdollar*! On the whole the new names may have more significance in the land of the Almighty Dollar, but they have sacrificed all their meaning and comeliness.

Miss Burne, in her *Shropshire Folklore*, has noted some curious instances of guesswork. *Haughmond Hill*, near *Shrewsbury*, is pronounced *Haymond*, and by the uneducated, 'Aymon'. The following explanation of the name (assuming it to be 'Aymon'), is too good not to be quoted in full:

"The time as the battle was, down by theer, the queen was raiden awee fro' the battle—I suppose it 'ud be Queen Mary. And her'd gotten her horse's shoes turned backerts, as folks shouldna know the wee (way) as her'd gone. And she was gooin' up the hill, and theer coom a mon, and he says to her, 'Well, missis,' he says, 'and howz the battle gettin' on?' And she answered him nothin' but, 'Eh, mon!' her says, joost loike that, 'Eh, mon!' and niver said no moor, because her was frightened loike at him speakin' to her; and so the hill come to be called 'Aimun' 'Ill. It was an owd labourin' mon as tawd may. We wun three on us gooin' to Sosebry, and we said, 'What was that place?' So then he tow'd us. An awd labourin' mon he were, as looked as if he might ha' bin workin' theer all his loife."

Another version makes Queen Anne watch the battle in the plain below from a group of fir-trees on *Haughmond Hill*. When she thought victory for the king

was certain, she jumped up, clapped her hands, and cried :

"Amen !
The battle's won."

And so the hill was called 'Awmon' Hill.

The extraordinary exclamations of queens when viewing battles are themselves subject for an historical disquisition in Notes and Queries. Queen Mary's "Eb, mon !" and Queen Anne's "Amen," find a fit parallel in the cry of Mary Queen of Scots when she was told that in consequence of the position of her enemy's forces she could not get from Langside to Dunbarton, and impetuously laid her crucifix in her hand. "By the cross in my loof, I will be there to-night, in spite of yon traitors ;" hence the name—Cross-myloof—of the village near Glasgow.

King James the Second is credited—we need scarcely say falsely—with giving the distinctive name to the three Strettons. In the first he enquired the name of the place. "Stretton," was the answer. "It's a very little Stretton," answered the gracious king ; and so we have Little Stretton. When his majesty next stopped he enquired the name of the halting-place. Again "Stretton" was the answer. "Oh, I suppose that must be Church Stretton, as I see you have got a church here," said the king. Thus Church Stretton got its name. At the next village James was not unnaturally astonished to hear that it also was called Stretton. "Stretton ! why they're all Strettons in this part of the country, I think !" So that's how All Stretton got its name. All Stretton is properly Old Stretton. The tale of King James is pure fiction.

Miss Burne seems to take a special pleasure in telling of these etymological flights. To her we also owe the story of the origin of the name China Hill, that of a steep lane from Newport to Edmond and Tiber-ton. Its real name is Cheney Hill. Old inhabitants declare it was called Chainey Hill because it was so steep that the wheels of loaded waggons going down had to be chained. From Chainey a refined mind evolved China Hill. Selattyn, on the Welsh border, is said to be called from a local schoolmaster who said, "I sell Latin." Moreton Hampstead is supposed to indicate that "belated travellers returning from Exeter market to Tavistock were frequently obliged to take refuge at a town on the moor instead of home, i.e. Moreton Hampstead." After this we are not surprised to learn that Stanton Harcourt owes its name

to some king who called to his general, "Stand to 'em, Harcourt," or that the name Longfarmacus (that of a village in Berwickshire) is due to the fact that the Roman soldiers' canteen there was kept by one Macus. "When they were sent north the thirsty legionaries would naturally 'long for Macus' and his tap of Falernian—hence the name."

Most of us are familiar with the story of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins. She is said to have been the daughter of a great British prince named Nothus, whom she greatly embarrassed by refusing to wed the son of a king of ferocious mind. Ultimately, like Jephtha's daughter, she was allowed a respite. The king and her father were to select ten virgins, to accompany her on a maiden voyage of three years. Each of the eleven maidens was to be allowed a thousand damsels under her. After many adventures they were all massacred by the Huns, at Cologne, about A.D. 451. A certain number of bones are still preserved. The magnitude of the legend has given cause for many guesses, but the reason we refer to it here is that, the key to the derivation of the name Maidenhead is supposed to be the legend of St. Ursula. It is said that the head of one of the eleven thousand was buried there, and hence the name. The ancient name is Mayden hithe, i.e. the wharf mid-way between Marlow and Windsor. So, too, Mr. Isaac Taylor points out that Kenilworth, although an ancient hunting-seat, has no connection with the kennels of dogs as is sometimes supposed, and is properly Killingworth. Cape Wrath is supposed to indicate the nature of the sea around it ; it really commemorates the land, for its true form is Cape Hvarf, indicating a point where the land trends in a new direction.

Sailors are no respecters of the names of their ships, witness the Billy Ruff'un, and we cannot be surprised to find that Anse des Cousins (the Bay of Mosquitos) becomes in English Nancy Cousin's Bay. The wonder rather is that it is not known as Aunt and Cousin's Bay. Setubal becomes a saint—St. Ubes ; and Soracate is also personified as St. Oreste.

We have now, perhaps, given enough examples to show how dangerously far wrong one may go who attempts etymology in what may be called, without offence, amateur fashion. As every budding actress thinks she can play Juliet, so every reading man thinks he can be the philologist of his

district. There is no reason why the humblest actress should not aspire to the leading part, but years of preparation, and a mind and body naturally fitted for weary tasks, are indispensable. There is no reason why Tom, Dick, or Harry should not settle the derivation of all the place-names for a dozen miles around his home, and settle them correctly too; but great care, some considerable study, and the caution of a Scotsman, are necessary for them all. Never prophesy unless you know, is a safe proverb; never explain a place-name until you have learnt all about it, is a companion rule for the philologist.

The late Dr. Routh is said to have given an enquiring student this answer, when he asked what to him would seem the most useful aid in life: "Verify your references." "And what next?" was the enquiry. "Verify your references," again was the reply. "And after that?" The oracle was immovable — "Verify your references." What a maxim, this, to be blazoned above every scholar's book-shelves! No one can afford to despise it, but to the student of place-names the teaching is particularly necessary. If you desire to find out the real meaning of a place-name, first endeavour to trace back, as far as you can, the name or names by which the place has been known in former times. Do not be content with a statement in a county history, that Leland says this or King says that, find out for yourself the earliest forms; take your local historian for a guide if you will, but "verify your references." It is hopeless to begin research with the present name of a place. Get the first form of the name, never mind how different the spelling may at first seem, and in nine cases out of ten this early form will give you the information which will just set you on the right track. Through the labyrinth there is a clue. Get hold of the clue, and you will see the light of day. By this we do not mean that when the first written form of name is found, the derivation will easily be got. It will be quite as useless to apply modern languages as a test to the old name as to the new. But in the course of your research you will probably have learnt something about the peoples who have dwelt in the district, and you will learn from the example of other district names whether it is in Gaelic, or Welsh, or Danish, or French you are to seek aid. We have said that the earliest written form of the word should be obtained, but we do not mean to imply that oral

tradition is to be despised. The pronunciation of people in country districts does not greatly vary from generation to generation. Often, too, an ancient name may be perpetuated only in common speech, while a modern or transformed ancient name holds place in print. The tradition which explains the popular name is generally as far wrong as it can well be, but there are few traditions in which there is not something of value.

We have spoken above chiefly of place-names in the country. In cities and towns, however, there are often many interesting relics hid in street-names. For explanation in this case, application may generally be made to the title-deeds of the landowner on whose ground the houses are built. This research will not always be successful, but some assistance will be obtained by indication of the names of those whose descendants should be able to assist in the word-hunting.

It seems hardly necessary, in conclusion, to claim that research into the origin of place-names is far from being trifling or unimportant. Apart from the service done by rooting up the weeds of erroneous conjecture, the student of place-names is undoubtedly engaged on work which tends to throw more light on the works and thoughts of our forefathers than do many pages of histories of battles and treaties.

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXVI. "IN THE MULTITUDE OF COUNSELLORS."

AMONG the many distinguished people to whom Mrs. Jervoise sent a ticket for Miss Ray's concert, and a card of invitation for the banquet which was to succeed it, was Mr. Josiah H. Whittler, the novelty in dramatic celebrities. Without doubt, whatever his merits might have been, he had made his mark. His first engagement had been for six nights only. Before the fourth night came, four or five rival managers were bidding high for him. But he was ambitious. He told himself that a moderate wait on his part would only excite them to still higher bidding efforts. And he was right—they made them.

His success on the stage, his utter unlikeness to the reigning English actor, and the peculiar way in which he wore his hair, combined to make society very crazy about him. Mrs. Jervoise was almost as

glad to get him to her concert—she always called it hers in speaking of it, for she quite felt as if she had invented Jenifer—as she was to get the reigning beauty. She resolved that they two should form a group—a living picture—which should be seen by, and carried away in the minds of all present. Accordingly she arranged a couple of low-backed, but exceedingly comfortable, throne-like velvet chairs in the middle of the front row, and there she placed them.

In fact Mrs. Jervoise neglected nothing that could conduce to the success of Jenifer's concert, and to her own glory as a patroness.

The only suggestion Jenifer made about the arrangements was :

"I should like my mother to sit where she can see and hear best."

And this suggestion jarred with Mrs. Jervoise's intentions, for she had thought of putting the widow in the back row."

"Perhaps you had better settle that matter for yourself, if you don't feel inclined to trust Flora," Effie said cuttingly.

To which Jenifer replied quietly :

"Very well, I will ; my mother shall sit in the front row."

The day and the hour came, and after some of the unimportant pioneers had paved the way, Jenifer came on, and sang her best. The room was admirably suited to her voice ; she felt that she had an appreciative and attentive audience, and she sang as Madame Voglio had never heard her sing before.

The plaudits were loud and long, but there were a very large number of men in the room, considering it was a morning concert, and the majority of these applauded her quite as much for her high-bred distinguished air, as they did for her exquisite singing.

But in spite of the plaudits, in spite of the marked advance Jenifer had made on all her former efforts, Madame Voglio said in her soul :

"Poor child ! she has touched her highest."

But she was careful of the expression of her face.

Captain Edgecumb, who was dividing himself between Jenifer when she was "off," and his sister when Jenifer was "on," said to the latter after Jenifer's second song :

"This settles me. I shall take her to America as soon as we're married. They say Patti will touch a thousand a night before she has done."

"If I were you I'd keep the secretaryship, and remember that Jenifer is not Patti."

"You're neither encouraging to me nor complimentary to her," he said coldly.

"My dear Harry—rubbish ! She is singing deliciously to-day under the happiest conditions ; but she won't have an audience like this in St. James's Hall, if she ever gets there, and if she has it, they'll not respond there as they are responding here."

"I gave you credit for being larger minded, Belle," her brother said tolerantly. "The fact is, my dear girl, you've been so long accustomed to be the most widely known and semi-public member of our family, that you don't like the idea of being beaten on your own ground by a sister-in-law."

She laughed good-temperedly. "Think what you please, Harry dear, only stick to your secretaryship. When Jenifer gets the offer of a thousand a night it will be time enough for you to throw yourself out of employment and become dependent on her."

Amongst those who were warmest in their congratulations to Jenifer when the concert was over were the reigning beauty and the great American actor. The latter, though he was not much impressed either by the magnificence of Jenifer's voice or by her management of it, was impressed by what he termed her "magnificent physique." "If she only can be taught to act as well as she can sing, she'll be worth training," he told himself ; and he tickled Captain Edgecumb's ears by saying : "That's a great singer, sir, and she'll be a great actress, too, if she falls into proper hands. With good training she'll end on the opera-boards ; but she ought to be taken away from that old woman now, who can do no more for her voice and style, and put to study with an actor who would develop her latent histrionic powers ; if that's done, when I open my theatre in New York next year, I shall be making her a big offer."

Captain Edgecumb as he listened to this felt as if riches were being a snare to him already.

"I must take care that my dear girl does not overwork herself," he thought magnanimously. Who can tell whether he had the parable of the unwise owners of the goose with the golden eggs in his mind at the moment ?

Then he left Jenifer to be interviewed and flattered afresh, and began to take greater care of old Mrs. Ray.

"Our dear Jenifer will carry all before her from this day," he said as he settled Mrs. Ray down in the most comfortable place he could find for her. "A man has been already speaking to me about engaging her for a series of representations in America. Whittler, the new American actor, you know, is the man, and he says—in fact, from what he says—I mean he has put it before me, that it would be well she should begin studying acting under some competent actor at once."

Mrs. Ray's eyes had dilated in horror during his speech to such an extent that he found himself floundering towards the end of it.

"A series of representations in America! Well that she should commence studying under some competent actor at once! What are you scheming for my child—for your wife?" she faltered out painfully.

"Her fame and fortune," he said decisively.

Then he heaped chicken mayonnaise in Mrs. Ray's plate, and all the time he felt that he was winning his spurs in Jenifer's estimation by this devotion to her mother.

Meanwhile Jenifer had been got hold of by the lady without whom nothing was anything in these days.

The reigning beauty had a house and a husband. The former was in a delicious locality, and the latter was generally in a fog. No matter; they were both admirably managed.

"Everybody's coming to me on the fifteenth. Oh, that's to-morrow; so it is. Well, never mind the shortness of the invitation, you must come too. I'll send a carriage for you at ten, if you'll tell me where you are."

Jenifer drew back. This freely and really kindly accorded invitation stultified her. She did not even know the name of the lady who said Jenifer "must come" to her house. Of the fact that going to this lady's house would set the stamp of fashion on her for a season in the singing world she was deplorably ignorant.

"Thank you; I am not going into society at all just now," she said, holding herself a hair's-breadth farther from the beauty. "My mother and I came to town entirely for the sake of my professional studies. We do not go into society at all."

"But you must come to me to-morrow and sing. My card—oh! Mr. Whittler, find my card, or photograph, or something, Mrs. Jervoise is sure to have one, for Miss Ray. She must come to-morrow night,

you know, and she has been so out of it that she doesn't know my address."

Then Mr. Whittler found "a card," or "a photograph," or "a something" of Mrs. Hazelton—the "beautiful Mrs. Hazelton," whose beauty, bonnets, and bad manners, every woman, who aspired to be noticed at all, copied this year. Before he could give it to Miss Ray, Mrs. Hazelton had been annexed by some one on whom fortune smiled for the minute, and Jenifer asked, holding the card away from her:

"Why 'must' I go? I don't like her a bit, and her offer of sending a carriage for me was mere impertinence."

"You must never call anything 'mere impertinence' when you want to get it, young lady," Mr. Whittler counselled, and Jenifer, waxing wroth, said:

"But I don't want to get it; nothing will induce me to go. I am going to be a public-singer, not a singing-machine to be set going at the insolent will of any one."

"What is this?" Mrs. Jervoise asked, coming up with Captain Edgecumb at the moment, and Jenifer told them incisively. "Really, you are very difficult," Mrs. Jervoise said coldly. "I have launched you, Mrs. Hazelton could sail you splendidly if you pleased her. Not to go to her to-morrow will be to condemn yourself."

"Ah," Madame Voglio cried, bustling up at this juncture, "they are all wrong, all wrong in assailing you now to go here, there, and everywhere, my child. Come away from it, and hear me. Wait, till they have to implore you to come to them, till they are ready to pay down the handsome sum of money for the gratification of their wishes——"

"I think, as Mrs. Hazelton is kind enough to say she will send a carriage for Miss Ray to-morrow night, it will be well for Miss Ray to go," Captain Edgecumb interposed eagerly, but Madame Voglio snuffed him out with a—

"Young man, you know nothing at all about it;" and then convoyed Jenifer off to a safe corner to give her a word of advice.

"Let none of them tempt you to sing at their private houses; you will have your fair chance before the public—your only judge now—soon. You surprised me to-day, my child!"

"Shall I do?" Jenifer asked wistfully.

"Ah, you will always 'do'; but I would have you do so much, so much, so much more, perhaps, than you ever can accomplish; but you must go on working, studying, plodding for a long time yet. Meantime,

I do not allow you to sing at any private house, you understand? This is my rule with my professional pupils. I assume a responsibility when I undertake one; that responsibility I discharge to the best of my ability. I owe it to the public, whose suffrages you are about to seek, to do my very best with you before I present you to it. It would set the seal of fashion on an amateur were she to appear and have a success at Mrs. Hazelton's house; it would stamp you with failure, it would be an abortive attempt to prematurely storm popular opinion."

To all this Jenifer listened very readily. She had not the slightest desire to be "taken up" by Mrs. Hazelton, or to achieve a fictitious success, however brilliant, under that lady's auspices. But Captain Edgecumb, Mrs. Jervoise, and Effie all took a different view of Madame Voglio's advice, and of the motives which made her give it.

"She doesn't want anyone else to have a hand in making Jenifer a success but herself," Mrs. Jervoise said. "She wants all the credit, selfish old thing!"

"That she is not, certainly, with regard to me," Jenifer said resolutely, thinking of the many lessons which Madame Voglio gave her, for which she would take no payment.

"Here's a proof that she's selfish," Mrs. Jervoise answered. "When I was her pupil—and I suppose I may venture to say what the best judges say of me, that my singing is equal to nearly any concert-singer's out—Voglio never objected to my singing at private houses. I might have sung myself hoarse for all she cared, for, you see, she knew she would never make a nice little income in commissions on getting me engagements."

"I'm well contented to leave myself entirely in Madame Voglio's hands. I owe her too much already to disregard her advice."

"That's nonsense, Jenifer, when you hear what Flora tells you," Effie said authoritatively. "It would be too absurd to go on 'studying,' and 'learning,' and 'trying to perfect yourself,' and wasting all your time and opportunities of making money, just to please Madame Voglio."

"I really think I'm too tired to discuss the subject to-day," Jenifer said with an air of cutting discussion short. "Hubert, where is my mother? She must be quite worn out."

"I think I may be allowed to say that

it will be very unwise of you to surrender yourself absolutely into Madame Voglio's hands. We know what these people are when they have an interested motive at work. You—or rather, I—will have to look sharply after your interests, Jenifer."

Captain Edgecumb was the speaker, and the glance of open-eyed amazed scorn which Jenifer flung at him made him sorry for a moment that he had spoken.

"These people" are the ones among whom, I trust, my lines will be cast," she said; and Captain Edgecumb was conscious that he had made a mistake when he saw Mrs. Jervoise and Effie exchanging laughing looks.

"I really think Captain Edgecumb is right," Mrs. Jervoise remarked, recovering her gravity. "Dear old Voglio's all very well—fat, she looked to-day, didn't she?—but she takes care of herself first and of her professional pupils afterwards. If I were you, Jenifer, I'd think twice before I let slip the chance of going to Mrs. Hazelton's. It may be a long time before you have the opportunity of singing to Royalty again."

That night, when they were sitting in the drawing-room, Mrs. Ray half asleep, after coffee and the unwonted excitement of the day, and Jenifer, quiet and subdued by reason of the tumult in her mind, which did not dare to find vent, Captain Edgecumb, who had come back with them, began to urge upon Jenifer the advisability of an earlier marriage than had at first been contemplated.

"Let me come out in public first," she pleaded.

But he had Mr. Josiah H. Whittler's words ringing in his ears, and he longed to have the right to order her off to America, to be "run" into a fortune.

NOW PUBLISHING,
THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER
OF
ALL THE YEAR ROUND,
CONTAINING
"A GLORIOUS FORTUNE,"

BY
WALTER BESANT
(Author of "The Captains' Room," "Let Nothing You Dismay," etc. etc.),
AND OTHER STORIES.

Price SIXPENCE, and containing the amount of Three Ordinary Numbers.

The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.

THE EXTRA
SPRING NUMBER
 OF
ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CONTAINING THE AMOUNT OF THREE ORDINARY NUMBERS.

PRICE]

1883.

[SIXPENCE.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
UNDER THE APPLE BLOSSOMS.	1	PENELOPE	32
A STUDY FROM THE LIFE	13	IN THE GOLDEN PRIME	41
A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY	20	A DANGEROUS SECRET	49
JACK'S SWEETHEART	62		

UNDER THE APPLE BLOSSOMS.

By THEO. GIFT.

CHAPTER I.

"WHY did you die when the lambs were cropping?
 You should have died at the apples' dropping,
 When Grasshopper comes to trouble,
 And wheat-fields are sodden stubble,
 And all winds go sighing for sweet things dying,
 Why did you die—"

"Mollie," I say reproachfully, "don't sing that dismal ditty. Matters are bad enough, but it hasn't come to dying yet."

"I don't know," says Mollie quite seriously. "I think mother would die if we had to leave the farm."

"Then we won't leave it. I've been thinking hard ever since that letter came, and—Mollie, I've got a plan!"

"A plan!" she repeats, opening her soft eyes half amusedly. "What is it?"

"Come down here and I'll tell you," I answer, rising up on one knee among the meadow grass and cowslips, with my hands full of the latter which I have been gathering. "How can I talk secrets to you up there?"

"Up there" is certainly rather out of secret pitch, for Mollie is seated some way off on the top bar of the gate which divides the meadow from the orchard. A pretty picture she makes there, too, with the grey, lichen-covered apple-boughs, all prinked and tufted with rosy bloom, meeting over her head; beyond her, long alleys of emerald-tinted orchard-grass, diapered in blue and

white with swaying bluebells and fallen blossoms of the pear; and beyond that again, part of the old red-brick farmhouse showing over a tall hedge of holly. She is a pretty creature herself, that sister of mine, tall and slim and fair, with skin like milk and hair of flax, and large, grave, grey eyes. Sitting there now with her hands clasped upon her knee, with the flickering sunlight on her smooth head, and the long, softly-rounded outlines of her limbs just indicated by a little wind which stirs the folds of her dark-blue linen gown and lays back the soft ruffles of yellowish cambric from her sweet white throat and arms, she would make a fit model any day for one of Müller's youthful Madonnas; and, as I gaze at her, the "plan" in my mind is strengthened, all the more that she comes down so submissively and seats herself at my side with a gentle, expectant smile.

"Well, Faith, what is it?" she says; but, perhaps because she looks so good and pretty, I hesitate a little, and my eyes avoid hers and busy themselves in contemplating the lapful of pale pink stalks and golden freckled blossoms I have gathered, ere I say:

"Mother looks dreadfully unhappy to-day, Mollie."

"Yes, doesn't she? I think it is the worry and not knowing whether this man mayn't be at Brentwood even now arranging how soonest to turn us out."

"But can he turn us out, Mollie? I thought the old squire gave father a thirty

years' lease, and that there were still twelve years of it to run."

"Yes, but he reserved the right of raising the rent at any time after the first ten, and directly he was dead the new man sent father word that he must either give up the remainder of his term, or have the rent raised twenty per cent. Father refused to leave; but I really think the trouble of it helped to kill him, for it seems he was often behindhand even with the lower rent, and how can mother pay more now he is gone? Besides, as Lawyer Wackem said in his last letter, now Mr. Randall is coming home he won't guarantee it not being raised again in a little while. The fact is he wants us out of it."

"And yet, Mollie, that's strange, for," looking at her curiously and sinking my voice, "haven't you heard that he was in love with mother once? And he is her first cousin, too. They grew up at Brentwood together. It doesn't seem natural when he has that big place of his own, he should want to turn her and her children out of our poor little home—if he cared for her."

"Ah, but she cared for father, and we are father's children, too," says Mollie quaintly. "But, Faith, what is your plan?"

"I'll tell you in a moment. I've not got it clear yet. How old is mother, Mollie?"

"Forty-two, her last birthday. Why?"

"She looks more," I say gravely, "but women always age more than men when they have worries. I shouldn't wonder, even if Hugh Randall is a little older than she, that he doesn't look it, and you—you like old men, don't you, Mollie?"

"Why, yes, sometimes," she answers, opening her eyes a little at my sudden question; "but Hugh Randall isn't old. He's younger than mother by two or three years. Don't you remember his mother's tombstone—'Died in childbirth, in the first year of her marriage, 1846'? That would make him only thirty-nine."

"Thirty-nine!" I exclaim, springing to my feet and clapping my hands joyfully, and sending thereby a sudden shower of fragrant yellow blossoms all over Mollie's blue gown and innocent, upturned head. "Why, that is not old at all. He is a young man, young enough for anyone, and you are so pretty and so like mother in your ways—Mollie, can't you guess my plan? It's as simple as possible. You must marry him."

"Marry—Hugh Randall!" Mollie repeats with rather provoking slowness. "How? Why? What do you mean?"

"What I say," I repeat energetically.

"As to the 'how' I've not thought about it yet; but it oughtn't to be difficult. Mr. Randall is coming to Brentwood, if he hasn't come already. Brentwood is only three miles off. Besides, he is our cousin in a way, and our landlord, as we know to our cost. We must meet him sooner or later, and then the only thing is to make him fall in love with you. Don't you see—oh, you stupid Mollie, don't you see—that if you were his wife the farm would be yours too, and he couldn't well turn mother out of it. Mollie, it must be done. You've got to marry Hugh Randall!"

"I beg your pardon," says a voice behind us, "I am afraid I am trespassing, but some one told me there was a right of way to Filday through these fields. Is it true?"

We both start violently—I do, at least, violence and Mollie being words totally incompatible; but the voice is that of a man and a strange one to boot; and the latter is a sufficiently rare circumstance in our small Devonshire village to warrant some little astonishment. To this is added an uncomfortable amount of confusion when, on turning round, we see above the quickset hedge which bounds our cowslip field, the head and shoulders of someone who is not only a man and a stranger, but one too undeniably well looking, well dressed, and comely in all respects not to set most maidens' pulses fluttering. It has the effect at any rate of robbing me altogether of my wonted readiness of speech, and so of leaving Mollie to answer:

"Not these fields. You should have gone down to the bottom of the one you have just left, and then crossed a stile into the water-meadows. There is a path there which leads into the high-road; but you can get to it more quickly this way, and you are quite at liberty to do so if you please, and if you do not mind getting over the gate. It is padlocked."

How sweet Mollie's voice is, soft and sweet as cream, and how modest and graceful she looks standing there in the shade of the budding oak-boughs, with the cowslips at her feet and in her hands! It is no wonder that the stranger's eyes rest on her with an admiration which needs no words to express it, or that his tone has a decided accession of respect in it as he answers, lifting his hat:

"Thank you very much. I have been

fishing since breakfast-time and have a friend waiting for me in Filday, so I shall be glad to be spared the longer route. Let me pick up your cowslips first, however. I am afraid I was the cause of your dropping them."

He has laid one hand on the gate while speaking, and vaulted over it with an ease which speaks the elasticity of youth; and yet he is not a very young man either. The thick brown beard and moustache which hide so much of the handsome face tell that as much as a certain careless ease of manner rare in men under thirty. His glance towards me, seventeen years old as I am, is such as one might cast on a child; and indeed, with my small pale face, and hair cut short, and waving in a boyish, nut-brown crop about it, I do look very young.

"Were you making a cowslip ball?" he says, smiling at me, though his eyes wander quietly to Mollie all the while. "I wish you had finished it before I came; I haven't seen one since I was a child, and I would have begged it of you in exchange for one of these trout here."

There are half-a-dozen of them—fat, speckled fellows glittering like silver in the basket slung across his shoulders, and as I think of mother, and how she used to enjoy those old Mr. Randall used to send her from time to time, I almost wish I had the cowslip ball to give him; but Mollie knows better, and when he adds, turning to her openly this time, "May I leave one behind me anyhow as toll for this pleasant short cut?" she answers at once:

"Thank you, but no, that is not at all necessary. You are quite welcome to it, and you will see the high-road at the other side of the stile there."

It is a dismissal, for all that it is spoken with a dove's eyes and voice of honey; and the stranger takes it as such. With a slight apology for the offer, and another expression of thanks, he lifts his hat again and goes; and as his tall wiry figure crosses the stile and disappears between the blossoming hedgerows, we two maidens stand and look at one another smiling. Mollie's cheeks are rather pink.

"Why didn't you let him give us a trout?" I say. "Wouldn't it have been proper? And, oh, Mollie, who can he be?"

"I don't know. No one belonging to this neighbourhood or we should have seen him before; but if he has been fishing in the Brint he must have a license from

Lawyer Wackem or be a friend of Mr. Randall's. Perhaps he is staying at Brentwood."

"Oh, dear!" I cry with a guilty start, "I hope he didn't hear what we were saying," and then almost before the words are out of my mouth I wish them unuttered; for an idea has flashed across my mind; an idea purely hypothetical, possibly absurd, but which I would not for the world should occur to Mollie if my "plan" is to have any chance of success. It is a relief to me that she answers so tranquilly:

"Why, Faith, of course not. He was on the other side of the hedge, and we were not talking loud. Besides, it was all nonsense."

"Indeed it was not," I answer warmly; but at that moment mother is heard calling to us from the orchard; and, nonsense or not, I feel instinctively that the subject is not one that I should care to enter on before her. Somehow neither Mollie nor I ever speak of Hugh Randall, and but rarely of Brentwood, before our mother, though the one is her cousin and the other was her girlhood's home. Not that we have been forbidden to do so, but that we have noticed that she never alludes to them of her own accord, and that when others do so she invariably answers with severest brevity, and makes haste to quit the subject in a way which shows us it is distasteful, if not painful, to her.

For this reason our knowledge of the family history is slight. We know of course that Squire Randall was a widower with an infant son, and that his wife's sister, a widow with one daughter, kept house for him and took care of his child until her death; when the daughter (our mother) assumed the housekeeping keys, and two or three years later married the squire's secretary and bailiff, one Luke Purcell: also that the squire's son went abroad as a young man, and, as some said, settled in the East Indies where he had remained ever since; not even coming home on his father's death.

But besides these bald facts, and behind them, there is a story, an old commonplace story enough, but which we only know by bits and hints, of two cousins growing up together in a big manor farm, and of the boy learning to love the girl with a lover's love while yet she only cared for him "as cousins care"; a story also of a male friend brought home by the boy when he returned from school for the last time, made welcome by the squire, and at the son's entreaty

retained as secretary and right-hand man to the old gentleman when the youth was sent away to finish his education in Germany; finally of the friend falling in love with the squire's niece and persuading her into a secret marriage which naturally had to be confessed before long, but which the uncle was persuaded to forgive, even allowing (being very fond of his niece) the young couple to stay on in the old place as before.

All this, as I have said, is a commonplace little romance enough; for indeed even Mollie and I, little versed as we are in love matters, know that it is no strange thing for cousins to fall in love with one another, or for one to be disappointed. What seemed strange to me was the passionate bitterness with which Hugh Randall, though only nineteen, took his disappointment. He came home from Germany quite suddenly about a week after the avowal of his cousin's marriage, and not only quarrelled desperately with her husband, the friend who had supplanted him, and his father for not espousing his cause, but carried his wrath to the extent of leaving Brentwood forthwith and be- taking himself to foreign parts.

I always thought Squire Randall a very proud-looking old man, and I suppose it was pride as much as father's usefulness to him which made him hold out for some time. Our Mollie was even born at Brentwood; but shortly after that event something happened which made my parents exchange that home for our present one; and by-and-by the squire engaged someone in father's place. There was no absolute quarrel between them, but the coolness which began then lasted till the day of the squire's death, and rather increased than diminished as time went on. True, father held this farm at an almost nominal rent, and presents of hot-house grapes, jelly, or game were sent from the big house when there was any case of illness at ours; but it was a sore come down, and all the same, after the practical headship at Brentwood, and my father felt aggrieved all the time. Nor was he successful in his new life. There are men who can manage other people's property better than their own, and double a large income while they fritter to waste a small one. Father must have been one of them. Brentwood is a great big place with two or three outlying farms attached to it and needing a very shrewd head to look after it satisfactorily; yet everyone agreed that it had never

paid so well as when father was at Mr. Randall's elbow. Now that he had nothing to manage but a very small dairy and fruit farm he seemed to have no heart or notion how to do it; but shut himself up with his books and accounts and scientific treatises, and let things go as they would. It was mother then who took the reins; put away all her pretty dresses and drawing-room ways; set herself to make butter and clotted cream like any other small dairy-farmer's wife; took the superintendence of the orchard; and worked like a slave at the picking, packing, and sending off of great baskets of rosy-cheeked apples, pears, brown and juicy, and glorious purple plums with a silver bloom on them, to the Exeter market.

Mother is a good, brave woman, one of those who will always put their shoulder to the stiffest wheel and make no moan about it; and I will say this, if poor father let her take the hardest share, as some folks have been unkind enough to say, he loved her with an almost worshipping love for doing it, and repaid her with never failing gentle words and caresses, and by teaching us French and Latin and mental philosophy, which are not things that every dairy-farmer's daughters know.

CHAPTER II.

It is an April evening two or three days after the one recorded in the last chapter, and I am wending my way homewards from an errand on which mother has sent me. It was to obtain a few eggs of an especially fine breed of Black Spanish hens from a farm about three miles distant; and I have them now in a basket nicely packed in cotton-wool, and am walking slowly, partly for their greater safety, partly because I am in no hurry and like to enjoy the evening.

In truth it is too beautiful a one to be wasted. Far away in the west the sky is a lovely apple-yellow, shading by delicate transmissions into pure green and thence again into blue, athwart which float long feathery clouds of tawny amber. The distant beech-woods of Bagely Manor stand out in dusky purple, their rounded outlines massed against this gold, or, where one tall tree rises above its fellows, traceried as in pen and ink upon a primrose field. Between them and me stretches a broad expanse of marshland covered with coarse reddish-brown rushes, with patches of emerald moss and pollard willows, and pools of shining, golden water wherein

dabchicks and marsh fowl of all sorts dive and flap and flutter, sending showers of glittering drops high over the furry silver of the young palm-buds which are just coming into their full beauty for Eastertide. The solitary sandy road I am traversing winds along this marsh and is flanked at the other side by a steep wooded hill, clad in every delicate tint of brown, and mauve, and pink, and early green, and finishing in a tall headland beyond which one can just distinguish a streak of violet glittering as with gold-dust in the setting sun. But it is not at this I am looking, dear as that distant glimpse of the sea is to me; but at something still brighter and more inviting to my gaze: a strip of bog not far from the road, and dark and treacherous to view, but overlaid with a pattern of gay green leaves and blossoms whose brilliant gold would "make a sunshine in the shadiest place," the first marsh-marigolds of the year opening their burnished cups in splendid solitude.

It is not in human nature to resist them; not in mine at any rate. I set down my basket of eggs incontinently, force my way through the tangled willow-boughs, and now planting my foot on a half-submerged root, now clinging to a stiff hazel twig, now nearly engulfed by a treacherous tuft of slippery grass, I reach the bed of golden blossoms, and am just reaching out my arm to grasp at a handful when the stone on which I am standing gives a sudden gurgling slide downwards, my feet slip from beneath me, and but for the clutch I still have on one of the sturdy boughs aforementioned, I should be floating on my back like a second Ophelia. As it is I am ankle-deep in mud, and sinking further with each attempt to extricate myself; therefore I shriek loudly for aid, and, getting no answer, shriek again.

This time it comes. The road is a lonely one, not much frequented at any time save by rush-cutters and fish-carts, the latter wending their way to Bagely and the neighbouring hamlets, from the little fishing port of Newton-Trevor which lies hidden behind that great brown headland; but now my cry is greeted by an answering "Hallo!" and next moment I can hear steps coming rapidly nearer and a second shout, "Hallo, there! Where are you?"

"Here! Oh, make haste!" I scream, clinging for dear life to my hazel-bough which bends cruelly beneath the strain, and then, thank goodness! it is over. There is a crashing among the thicket in

my rear, a sudden splash, the grasp of a strong hand lifting me bodily out of the quagmire, and next moment I am half dragged, half carried through the reeds and planted in safety on the bank by an individual, whom, till then, I do not recognise as the stranger who a few days back invaded our cowslip field.

It is rather a humiliating position. My hat has fallen off, my long rough cloak of Connemara-red has twisted round hind part before, and my feet and ankles are encased in a black coating of mud which leaves slimy impressions on the tender green grass. I am conscious that I look younger, more like an unkempt mischievous child than ever; and what is worse, I can see that the stranger's eyes are laughing so uncontrollably that despite my vexation I am fain to laugh also, though with sufficient shakiness to make him look grave and apologise.

"Oh, you needn't do that," I say, smiling more readily. "Indeed I am very, very much obliged to you. I don't know how deep the water is there, so I might have been drowned if you hadn't come by in time."

"Hardly!" he says cruelly. "I was all over that bit after birds the other day, and it isn't ten inches deep anywhere. That wouldn't drown you."

"The water might not, but how about the mud?" I retort. "Just look at my feet! And it was all for nothing too. I only brought this away," opening my small wet hand, and showing him a fragment of green stalk and one mangled flower. He laughs again, which is unkind.

"Oh, were you after those yellow things? Why, there will be lots out in the water-meadows at the bottom of your own fields before long."

"Ah, but the meadow ones are never as fine as these, and these bloom first. Mollie and I always come here for them, and I wanted them for Mollie," I say piteously. My companion's expression changes.

"Did you? Wait a moment then, and you shall have as many as you like," he answers cheerily, and strides off among the weeds and rushes to appear again a moment later with a huge dripping bunch of green and gold which he hands me, saying, "Will that content—Mollie; or shall I get you some more?"

"No, thank you, that is heaps. She will be delighted. I must hurry home, though, my feet are so wet. Oh, where are my eggs?"

"You can't carry them and that bundle of plants as well," says the stranger as I take up the basket, fortunately intact. "Let me help you. I am going your way." And as I see no reason to the contrary, he does so, and walks at my side, asking presently, "What do you call these—buttercups?"

"Buttercups? No; marsh-marigolds; don't you know them?"

"I suppose I did once; but I have been out of England long enough to forget the names of English flowers, though like enough I may have picked them in this very spot as a boy."

"Did you live here then? I don't remember you."

"Probably not, as you were certainly not born when I left; but I did live very near here all the same."

I am silent. That wild fleeting idea which just flashed across my brain after our previous meeting has come back to me with a rush that fairly takes my colour away. Is it a heaven-sent instinct, I wonder, and he—can he be—? Oh, what a glorious chance for us all if it be true and I can make for mother a friend out of an enemy, and for Mollie— My breath comes in little gasps as I nearly choke under the rush of disconnected thoughts, and he observes it and says kindly:

"You are out of breath. Don't walk so fast. I am sure Mollie—that is your sister I suppose?—looks far too good and gentle to be glad of flowers at the expense of your tiring yourself out and getting wet feet into the bargain."

Involuntarily I gasp again. If he thinks that of Mollie now—! But it will never do to waste my time in silence and staring. I may never have such another opportunity, and already I can see the clustered chimneys of our farm peeping above the snowy wreath of pear and plum blossom which encircles it like a bridal garland. Far off the peewits are sending their shrill trembling cry across the dusky marshland. The saffron-coloured sky is deepening into rose colour and the purple woods to black. It is getting late, and every step brings us nearer home.

"You are quite right," I say earnestly; "Mollie is good, through I don't know how you guessed it. She," with great emphasis, "is the best person I know anywhere. If you ask anyone near here they will tell you the same."

"They will tell me at any rate that she has a little sister who is very fond of her,"

he says, smiling; then as he sees me colour guiltily: "No, I am not laughing at you. Sisters ought to love one another; and if yours is half as sweet and loveable as her face would make one think you have good right to do so. She—she was not vexed at my taking advantage of her permission the other day, was she?"

"Vexed? No," I answer quickly. "Why should you think so?" and the thought rises in my mind: "If you be the person I believe you to be you must know you have a right to cross our fields without permission at all."

"Well, she sent me away rather quickly," he says, with a slightly aggrieved laugh, "and she would not take my trout. I am afraid she thought me impertinent for offering them."

"Oh dear no," I answer reassuringly, "you need never fear that with Mollie. I sometimes think unkind things of people; but not she—ever. If she was a little grave the other day it was because she was not feeling very happy, that was all."

"Not feeling happy? Why—but perhaps I ought not to ask," he puts in, checking himself in his somewhat imperious questioning; but I answer quite gravely and innocently:

"Oh yes, you may; it is no secret. Do you see that farm-house there, the one in the orchard we are coming to?"

"Plumtree Farm? I—I mean the one among the pear-trees—yes."

"Well," growing very red, and speaking rather fast, for he has betrayed himself by that familiar mention of the house, and, as I can see, is vexed at having done so, "that is our home, and we love it—Mollie loves it dearly, and very soon we shall be turned out of it. Isn't that enough to make one unhappy?" I have not alluded to mother's love for it, because I cannot form sufficient guess as to a certain person's feelings towards mother to make it safe to do so; but, as I glance timidly at him to see the effect of my words, I perceive that his face has reddened deeply beneath its swarthy tint, and there is a decided constraint in his voice as he asks:

"Who is going to turn you out—your landlord?"

"So Lawyer Wackem says," I answer, almost too frightened now to keep my own voice steady; but making a brave effort to do so all the same. "He—he told mother that Mr. Randall wanted it for himself; but he has Brentwood, all that beautiful place, and Buggins's Farm and Elmtree

Cottages as well. Do you think he can really want our little farm too; and when he knows that it is all that we have, and that we cannot pay any more rent for it if we tried ever so?"

For a minute my companion does not answer; then he says, in the same stiff manner as before:

"Perhaps he does not know how much you care about the place. Has your mother spoken to him?"

"No," I answer sadly, "she cannot; they are not friends, at least he is not friends with her. She never told us how it was," I put in hurriedly, feeling that a "certain person" might be displeased if he thought his early love-affairs had been babbled about to a chit like myself, "but it was something that happened when mother was a girl, and they say he has never forgiven her; and so——"

"And so he wants to turn you out of your home, and raises your rent as he can't do so in any other way," says the stranger coolly. "But, in that case, what a very malicious sort of person he must be!"

I am trembling all over now. It is no use trying to conceal it. My knees are knocking together, and my face is dyed with blushes, for which no reflection from those rosy clouds, which are now flushing the pear-blossoms to a rosy pink, can satisfactorily account. The first impulse—born of mingled cowardice and politeness—is of course to deny the imputation, which, indeed, is made in a tone of sufficient offence to almost necessitate an immediate apology; but love is stronger than fear, and love for mother and Mollie is sharpening my wits to-day to a wonderful degree.

"If," I think to myself, "a certain person dislikes even to be accused of malice, he can hardly like to be guilty of it;" and my courage rises with the thought. "Well, it would be cruel—rather, wouldn't it?" I say mildly, but avoiding to look him in the face the while, "and—and for that reason you can't wonder that, though Mr. Randall is our cousin, we—Mollie and I, that is—feel rather sore about it, or that we—even Mollie, you know—can't like him as much as she might otherwise have done."

There is a moment's silence, just long enough for me to have time to think to myself, "So now, if you want her to like you better, as, from what you said just now, I fancy you do, you know how to set about it," and then he speaks, looking

at me full and keenly, yet with a severity in the glance beneath which I shrink beforehand.

"No, I don't wonder at it at all. My wonder is for something very different, namely, that feeling this, and disliking your cousin as you say you do, nay, as his mean and revengeful character warrants you in doing, you should, nevertheless, be so anxious to force the sister—whom you also say you love—into that marriage with him which I think you were urging on her the first time I saw you, and which would, of course, oblige her to leave the home so dear to her, whatever it might do for you. I do wonder at that, I confess."

There is no answer. For once I am silenced, crushed. I simply stand gazing at him with fallen lip and eyes of blank dismay, and after a second he adds, a decided touch of contempt in his tones:

"Perhaps I ought to apologise for alluding to a conversation not meant for my ears; but I—well, I happen to know Mr. Randall; and, when young ladies discuss a matrimonial plan, which certainly affects him as well as them, with such energy as to be audible on the other side of their boundary wall, they can hardly complain if they are overheard."

Again he is unanswered. He may say what he likes now without fear of reply; for what reply is there, and where, oh, where are the "matrimonial plans" now, to which he alludes so sarcastically? It is a comfort that we have reached our own garden, and that I can grasp the mossy gate-post for support, for the shock has turned me dizzy as well as dumb. To think that all the time—all the time, when I thought I was leading him up so cleverly to the desired consummation, he was simply leading me on to expose my poor little machinery for the same, and then destroy it with a breath. One thing is certain, not only that he will never marry Mollie now, and that all his expressions of interest in her must have been simply to draw me out, but that I have made matters far worse than they were before; and, oh, what a fool I have been, and what would Mollie, what would mother, say to me if they knew!

They do not know. For that at least I may be thankful. Perhaps it is well for rather pert people, with a prevailing idea that they are a little more brilliant than the rest of the world about them, to get a regular downfall once in a way and be made to feel smaller than the veriest

"Colin Clout" of the community, but the process is not a pleasant one, and I am swallowing a sufficiently large dose of humiliation at present to feel grateful that nobody guesses at it at home, where things go on just the same as usual, only a little more sadly.

It is known for certain now that Hugh Randall is back at Brentwood. Some one says he has only come down to nurse a sick friend whom he has brought with him for change of air, while others assert that he means to make it his permanent home once more, and that he has begun by starting a steam-plough and raising his rents all round.

But though thus much filters to us in the way of gossip, mother's habit of silence, particularly where her family matters are concerned, has made people in general rather shy of speaking to us of a person who is known to be related to us, and about whom, although estranged, we may be supposed to have the earliest information.

As for Lawyer Wackem, he has neither called nor written since that letter which first suggested my ill-fated "plan." Mother answered it by offering to give up the long meadow—our best grazing one—if we might keep the rest of the farm at the old rent until the expiration of our lease; but there has been no reply to this, and as we stand in the dairy, one fresh cool morning, packing rolls of sweet, fragrant, saffron-coloured butter in their envelopes of clean white linen for the market, mother says, with a worried look in the great brown eyes which mine are said to resemble:

"Don't waste the stuff in tearing it, Faith; you've but just enough for that quantity of butter. How much is it, Mollie?"

"Nineteen pounds, mother; that's two for ourselves, and two for the vicarage, and one for Miss Gwynnis, and—let me see, fourteen for the market. Old John will have a grand load when he calls for the basket," says Mollie's voice, sweet and cheerful as usual, but mother isn't cheered by it to-day.

"Ah!" she says, sighing, "I wonder how long it will be before he has none to call for—none of my making, at least. I was thinking yesterday we've not had such a spring for fruit promise these six years. Scarce an east wind ever since the apples were in bloom; but it won't matter if we aren't here to gather them when they're ripe."

"No news is good news, mother dear," says Mollie gently.

"And especially with regard to Hugh Randall," I burst in, by no means gently, but rather with a new access of bitterness against that gentleman which has come upon me ever since the evening of my luckless adventure after marsh-mari-golds ten days previously. Hitherto no one has paid much attention to it, but now when I go on to add, "I am sure we have never heard any good of him," mother takes me up with an amount of coldness and displeasure so unwonted as to startle us both.

"I do not think you have ever heard much of him at all, Faith, and certainly no evil. Try, my child, not to let your tongue get too sharp. It is a pert habit and not an amiable one;" and then, without waiting for an answer—perhaps a little startled by her own severity—she goes away out of the dairy, leaving me crimson and confused, and feeling that this, too, I owe to Hugh Randall. Mother—mother who never scolds anyone—has scolded me!

CHAPTER III.

"POOR Faith!" says Mollie, looking at me with tender compassion; "I'm so sorry, but what has made you take such a hatred to Hugh Randall of late? After all, the farm is his, and, as mother says, he hasn't done anything yet."

"Except get me a scolding and help me to make a fool of myself!" I think, though I dare not say it in words, for even Mollie, gentle as she is, might scold too if I were to make confession of the cause of my wrath, and after a minute she says in a different tone:

"Who do you think I've seen twice lately, Fay? But you'll never guess, so I'll tell you. The gentleman who asked leave to come through our fields that day. Do you remember?"

Do I remember! Now if only Mollie could see the colour of my face, but fortunately hers is turned the other way, all but one little ear which, strangely enough, is rather pink too.

"When? Where? Why didn't you tell me?" I ask all in a hurry.

Mollie smiles.

"When? The first time, three days ago; but that was merely at a distance. Only he saw me and lifted his hat, and then turned back a second to put the gate open for me he had just passed through. It was civil, wasn't it, Faithie?"

No answer.

"And the second time was yesterday. He overtook me in that lane at the bottom of the vicarage garden, and walked a little way with me. He said— Faith, why didn't you tell me that it was he who picked those marsh-marigolds for me the day your feet got so wet trying for them? He asked very kindly if you had caught cold after it."

"Did he!" I say with a little toss of my head, then suddenly: "And what else did he say to you?"

"Oh, a great many things. He— Faith, do you know who he is?"

My heart gives a great jump.

"Why? Do you?" I ask, wondering.

"Yes," she says quite simply, "for I asked him. You see, he seemed to know all about us, and to be so—so interested; and he said that was natural, because he was a friend of our cousin Hugh Randall. He is staying at Brentwood, he says, so you see," with a bright, innocent look, "he must know him pretty well."

For a minute I am speechless; then wrath at the deception practised on her gives me voice.

"A friend of Hugh Randall's," I repeat ironically. "Ah, I don't doubt that, or that he knows him better than anyone else."

But Mollie interrupts me.

"Yes, that's exactly what he says; and he tells me Mr. Randall is not at all a harsh or grasping sort of man. Faith," looking up at me with the loveliest little touch of warm colour in her face; the tips of her pretty fingers just resting on the roll of yellow butter; the sunlight flickering through a trellis of young vine-leaves on her sweet face, her white round arms bared to the elbow, and her gown of lilac cotton; and beyond, the spotless red-brick floor and white walls of the dairy, with its broad shelves lined with rows of great earthenware milk-pans; "Faith, whatever Hugh Randall is, I do think his friend is rather nice; don't you?"

I cannot help it. I try, but it is no use.

"No," I say vehemently, "I don't. I think him detestable. I—I always thought so."

And then, for fear of more, I catch up my hat and one of the rolls of butter, and muttering something about Miss Gwynnis, make a dash for the door and escape.

In truth, I feel as if I must get away, for fear lest I should do more harm than I have done already.

My first impulse is, naturally, to expose Mr. Randall's silly deception (Alas! who but our Mollie would have been so simple as to be taken in by that well-worn fiction of "a friend"?), and not only tell her who he is, but how he played eavesdropper to our foolish plans, and then led me on to carry them out by singing her (Mollie's) praises to him. But there is an old proverb, "Once bit, twice shy," and my past folly has made me fearful of fresh. Perhaps the man wishes to be friends with us, after all. Perhaps his admiration of Mollie is more genuine than the character he has assumed for her benefit; and if so, would it be wise to set her against him, and so anger him further—he who holds our future in his hands? Undoubtedly it is safer for me to be out of the house than in it this morning.

It is fortunate, therefore, that there is that butter to take to Miss Gwynnis. She is a very old woman, and was once house-keeper to Squire Randall before my grandmother came to live with him and fulfil the duties of that post herself.

I have sometimes thought it was for this reason that Miss Gwynnis has never shown any great love for either mother or ourselves; but, indeed, she loves no one very much, being paralysed on one side and sadly hard of hearing—afflictions which have cut her off from her kind, and soured a temper never over-sweet. She's a good woman, is Miss Gwynnis. She wouldn't say an untrue thing of her worst enemy, but if there is a true thing to say which is also disagreeable, then I do think she takes a deep pleasure in saying it—for which reason I am not usually fond of volunteering to take her that weekly supply of butter, which mother always takes care she shall have, whoever else comes short.

She receives me to-day in her usual way—i.e., with a torrent of reproaches for the length of time that has elapsed since Mollie and I last visited her; with complainings of her own aches and pains; finally, as I half expected, with mention of our landlord.

"And so Hugh Randall's back at last, and time enough for't too! Not that I've seen him. He'd never think o' coming near a poor, half-dead old woman like me, for all I was ever his friend more than your mother's."

"You needn't say that to my mother's daughter, Miss Gwynnis, and," with a touch of petulance, "as for Hugh Randall, I don't at all doubt his memory is better

as an enemy than a friend at most times."

"I'll say the truth of anybody," retorts Miss Gwynnis, "and to prove it, let me tell you your mother's daughter is the last person to throw stones at the man you're speaking of, and so she ought to have taught you."

"Mother never throws stones at anybody, Miss Gwynnis. I wish I could speak as kindly as she does of Hugh Randall."

"And why shouldn't she, child? She never suffered any wrong at his hands, while he—— Good Lord, to think o' the folly of it! Nineteen years o' life exiled from his own country for the sake of a love which could let itself be tricked away from him!"

"What do you mean, Miss Gwynnis? Who tricked him? Not mother, I'm sure. She couldn't."

"No, but your father could and did. His best friend too! and that's the truth also, though 'tis of the dead I say it."

"I suppose you mean that they both were in love with mother, and that she took a man in preference to a boy," I answer haughtily. "Why, Miss Gwynnis, I've seen him, and he looks years and years younger than she does even now. It seems almost wrong to think of such a thing between them."

"Aye, a mother's always an old woman to her children, and yours has had her share o' troubles to age her; but there are only four years between them, child; and there didn't seem that in the old days when he was in love with her and gave her in charge to Luke Purcell, your father, to watch over and guard for him till his return."

"Did he do that?" I ask a little sadly, for indeed I had never heard of it before.

"Aye, did he; and I heard him. 'Twas the day he was leaving for Germany to finish his education, and I was in his room seeing that nought had been left behind, when he came into the study adjoining with Luke Purcell; and said he, laying both his hands on the other's shoulders:

"'One last charge, Luke! You know how I love Mary, and that my one aim in life is to wed her and make her mistress here in truth. I know at least that she loves no man better than me. Watch over her for me, and keep her in that mind. 'Tis the only thing I ask of you in return for what you're pleased to say I've done for you.'

"'If I can—if she'll let me——' your father said, but Hugh interrupted him:

"'Put your own feelings for me into your talk of me. Remind her how true and strong is the love I bear her; and above all, let me have the earliest warning of any rival with her. Promise me that, Luke.'

"'I promise,' said Luke.

"'Then strike hands on it,' said Hugh, giving him his hand, 'for, if I lost Mary, I should never care to set foot in this place again, or in any other where hers had rested.'

"They went away after that, and I saw no more of them; but you know how it ended—how when Hugh came home he found his fine friend: the friend he had picked up as a half-starved usher in a school, and had given a home in his father's house at his father's right hand: married to the girl he loved, and she already in the way to be a mother, without one word having been breathed of it to him or anybody till discovery was too near to be averted. No wonder he wouldn't sleep under the same roof with them, but shook the dust off his feet and went away the same day. The wonder is to me that he'd sufficient pity for the woman's state not to take her husband by the throat and chuck him out o' doors instead."

"Oh, Miss Gwynnis, don't!" I cry, flushing. "But did he tell the squire? Surely if he did, and if it was true——"

"The old man would have turned your father off the premises and had his son back? Aye, but I doubt if he ever was told—properly. He was away the day Hugh returned, and the young fellow only wrote to him that he'd found out Luke Purcell for a false dishonest villain, and that one or other of them must leave Brentwood."

"And did father stay? Oh, Miss Gwynnis——"

"Yes, my dear, he did. I'm not blaming him for that. He loved your mother dearly, I do believe; and he knew that her love for him had already cost her the mistressship of Brentwood, and, if he let himself be turned out, would cost her bread, and meat, and shelter too. He'd nothing of his own, you see; nor she neither; and though he might have gone back to teaching, or tried for another secretaryship, the getting one at once would ha' been but a chance, and too poor a one, to risk with her in her condition. Besides, he'd got a vast of influence over

the squire, who was nearly blind, you know; and maybe he hoped Hugh's anger would blow over. Anyhow, he persuaded the old man it would; and that the affair was nothing but a fit of jealousy in a passionate boy; and he got him, in consequence, to write to Hugh a jesting sort of letter, saying he thought he was as good a judge as his son of Luke's worth or worthlessness; that the latter was of great use to him, and that if he had forgiven him for marrying Mary, he was not going to take back his forgiveness because a hot-headed schoolboy chose to get up a bit of romance about her. The squire told me of the letter himself, and said he had bade the lad come back at once and not be a fool; but all the answer he got was a note cold and short enough:

"You have chosen to stand by a scoundrel instead of by your son. I have no right to dispute your choice, but make the most of him, and take care he doesn't deceive you too.
H. R."

"It was written from on board ship, and all they knew of him for a long time afterwards was that he was alive and somewhere in the East Indies; but by-an'-by, I suppose the truth of the story leaked out—it don't matter how—and determined the squire to compromise matters. He wouldn't turn his niece and her husband adrift, but he got another manager and gave your father Plumtree Farm at a long lease and a light rent, and Luke had to take it and be thankful. I don't believe he was thankful, however, and as time went on and Hugh never came back, I've heard there were bitter words more than once between him and the old man. Aye, 'tis a sorry story all round, but the chief sufferer in it was young Randall, for 'twas no boyish fancy that made him give up home, and father, and friends, and go out to seek his fortune in the wide world; and it isn't for you, Faith Purcell, to sharpen your tongue on him now he has come home at last to his own."

Indeed I feel that I never shall again. Overhead the sky is a deep, pure blue, chased over by a feathery flight of snow-white clouds, through which in swift sharp rays of light and shade the sunlight sweeps across the wooded glades. Spring has put on her robe of green, and filled with April showers the frothing streams. The hedgerows are white with scented may, the copses carpeted with blue-bells. The

greenfinch "cheeps" from the thorn, lambs frisk at the mother's side, and

Larks go singing, singing, singing,
Over the cornfields wide.

But there is a weight on my young heart and a dimness in my eyes which ill accord with the April sunshine. I wish Miss Gwynnis had never told me this story. I feel so sorry for all the actors in it, my mother, my father, the old squire, even—yes, most of all for the man who "suffered most;" and while I am thinking of it, and trying to make excuses for the seeming treachery of the one friend by the strength of that love which in the other had woke such unnatural bitterness, my heart gives a sudden leap, and then seems to stand still; for coming towards me along the country road, I see a tall, manly figure walking beside another which reclines in a bath-chair drawn by a sturdy lad.

It is Hugh Randall and his invalid guest. They are quite close to me before I even see them; but in my present mood I feel it quite impossible to go on and confront them. Fortunately, however, there is a gate opening into a ploughed field on my left hand; and at the risk of appearing rude, awkward, cowardly, what you will, I turn abruptly, and crossing the lane make my escape through it with a speed which almost approaches a run as I find myself in safety on the other side, and screened from view by a tall hedge.

Alas! it is a brief safety. The next moment my ears have caught the sound of the gate swinging to for the second time; and in another minute there is a clear pleasant voice at my side, saying:

"Are you going to quarrel with me altogether, Miss Faith, that you run away at the first sight of me as if I were an ogre?"

I stand still at once. Indeed it is not easy to run or even walk away quickly over a stiff ploughed-up soil; but oh, how little time it takes to bring about a complete revulsion in one's feelings! A second back I was feeling pitiful, compunctious, almost reverential over this man. Now, as I look up into his brown handsome face and bright eyes full of latent laughter, I ask myself, is it possible that nearly twenty years of loss and bitterness can ever have passed over his brow and left it so unruffled, that anything more than his own will and pleasure can have sent him forth, a lonely exile, for the best half of a man's life? Perhaps he sees the troubled

bewilderment of it in my eyes, for he adds more earnestly :

"Indeed, I had no intention of offending you the other day. On the contrary, I wanted very much to make friends, and I want it still more now, and to ask you to help me—if you will."

There is a colour in his face which makes him look younger and comelier than ever. When I think of my pale, worn, middle-aged mother—Heaven bless her!—the discrepancy between them almost amounts to an impertinence, and I feel my father fully excused.

"How can I help you?" I ask, colouring confusedly. "I would if I could, and I am not at all offended; but I don't see——"

"How?" he interrupts quickly. "Oh, I'll easily tell you; for it's not so much your doing as abstaining from doing anything that I want. Will you promise me not to use your influence (I am aware you have a great deal) with your sister to make her dislike me—no, I know you haven't done so yet; though I'm afraid I gave you cause the other day; but I have seen her once or twice since then, and I can see she thinks very much of you, as much as you do of her——"

"You did not believe in my thinking of her the other day," I answer with a quivering lip; but he stops me.

"Oh yes, I did. That was only a jest; but I was a little angry with you besides for wanting to marry so sweet a sister to a man she had never seen, and did not like, simply because he was well-to-do; I am well-to-do also, however, quite as well-to-do as he is, and little as I have seen of your Mollie, I like her so well, that if she could care—if you could teach her to care for me in return, I would not only try to make her happy, but——"

"You would let mother stay on in the farm?" I cry so eagerly that he smiles.

"I don't think you need ask that. It is true that I did come here with the express intention of taking possession of it; but if it is mine, and even if your sister would not be my wife, she need never fear my turning her out of it. Do you think she would be cruel enough to refuse me, however? I am a little old for her, perhaps," looking at me rather wistfully; "but, after all, though Ceylon suns have aged me to look at, I'm not much over thirty, and my heart is young enough at any rate; for I never cared for any woman yet till I saw her

standing under the oak-tree that day with the cowslips in her hand."

If he had only not said that! and I was beginning to like him so well. There is an involuntary touch of scorn in my voice as I ask :

"Have you forgotten our mother, Cousin Hugh? Because it is not my influence you will want with Mollie, but hers, and if you tell her that——"

"Your mother!" he repeats, staring. "If I ever saw her I have forgotten her certainly; but I was such a baby when my people left Devonshire that's not to be wondered at; and why do you call me 'cousin'?"

"Why, are you not our cousin?" I say, half sobbing. "I—I thought you were Hugh Randall. I——" But the laugh that follows that announcement drowns the remainder.

"I Hugh Randall! Why, that is Hugh out in the lane there. I am only his friend, Russell Galway. I told your sister so."

"But we heard—someone in the village said Mr. Randall's friend was a great invalid."

"Then, like most gossips, someone in the village got hold of the wrong end of the story. It is poor Randall who is the invalid. I am nothing but his ex-partner in a coffee-plantation in Ceylon, and present guest while I look about for a bit of land on which to settle down at home. Faith, will you not come and speak to your cousin? I have been telling him about you and your sister, and he wants to see you greatly. Indeed he is not at all what you think him."

And somehow, in another moment—for how can I refuse?—I am standing beside the bath-chair in the lane with my hand clasped in that of a thin, worn looking man, who may be any age to judge from his silvered hair and the lines upon his brow, and whose dark passionate eyes look into mine with a wistful scrutiny which awes me strangely.

"I think your name must be Mary," is one of the first things he says; and when I tell him, "No, I am only Faith," he answers: "You have your mother's eyes. You should bear her name; but yours is a good one, too. Will you have 'faith' in me, my child, and cease to look on me as an enemy any longer? I have been wrong and foolish in carrying an old resentment so far that when I decided on coming home to end my days, I thought I could not bear to live in the same place with

the man who was the object of it. I did not know then, however, that God had already settled the matter for me, or that he was no more. Lawyer Wackem far exceeded his instructions in every way, and you must tell your mother so. Tell her also that I have promised to sell Plumtree Farm to a man for a wedding present to his wife; but," with a kindly smile at his friend, "I do not think she will find her occupancy disturbed by that. If it should, she and you must e'en come back to Brentwood, and take care of a poor invalid instead. Should you dislike that very much, little Faith?"

And I cannot say I should. There is one word I must add, however: I have ceased to consider myself the brilliant member of the family.

A STUDY FROM THE LIFE.

By PAUL BLAKE.

CHAPTER I.

It was a cold drizzly evening in February, the streets were a sea of mud, the weather was of the sort known in Scotland as "saft." However, Charlton's chambers looked snug enough; the fire was bright, the curtains drawn close. The occupant of the sitting-room was ensconced in a big armchair, smoking a very deeply coloured meerschaum; he looked as comfortable as possible. It was a perfect haven of refuge to one coming from the miserable streets; at least it looked so to Welby as he pushed the door open and came in.

"Don't move, Jack," was the visitor's greeting, "you look too comfortable."

"Don't interrupt me for half a minute," was the inhospitable rejoinder. "You'll find tobacco about somewhere."

The speaker kept his eyes on a page of manuscript, which he was perusing with eagerness. In a few minutes he threw it down, and jumping up, shook hands heartily with his visitor.

"Same old game?" enquired Welby.

"Yes; but I've nearly mastered it, and it's about time; we've a rehearsal to-morrow at twelve."

"Shall I hear you go through it?"

"Thanks, there is one scene I'm rather afraid of; I know the words right enough, but it's a very different thing to say them when you're cutting about the stage with a lot of furniture to tumble over, and two or three people about who don't know what

you are going to do, and get in your way. There you are, I'm going to start from the tenth line. Give me my cue."

Welby took the manuscript and read: "'Loved each other from childhood.' Who says that?"

"I do, to Digby, my rival," explained Charlton. "He leans towards me and whispers, 'But are you sure she loves you still? Look at that!'" He hands me a letter, from which I learn that she has been deceiving me."

"I see," remarked Welby, tranquilly reading the next cue: "'Until you die.'"

Charlton gave, with energy, the next speech, in which he had to bewail the crushing of his hopes, the death of his aspirations, and to declare his irrevocable intention of obtaining revenge on the villain who had supplanted him in the affections of the girl he loved. Welby listened attentively, checking him from the manuscript. When he had finished Welby remarked: "Yes, you know that all right, but are you going to say it like that?"

"I don't know," replied the young actor disconsolately; "how on earth ought I to say it?"

"It strikes me that when a fellow hears that the girl he loves has thrown him over for another man, he should show his emotion in his countenance to some extent."

"Don't I?" demanded Charlton, a trifle sharply.

"You show emotion enough, but it's the wrong sort. I thought you had a violent cramp, and were trying to ease it by contortions. Now, my dear boy, you know people don't behave like that in real life; a man restrains himself even in the crises of his existence."

"Nonsense!" returned Charlton; "how can you show the difference between an ordinary event and a crisis, except by gesture and voice?"

"You ought to be true to nature," persisted his critic.

"That's all very well, but how can I be? It's my one desire to act as people do in real life, but how can I tell how a man would behave who learnt he had been jilted? For the matter of that I don't believe you know either."

"I can't say I do from experience," assented Welby, "but if I had to study a part—which thank goodness I haven't—I'd manage somehow to know how the thing was really done. Though it's true the public won't know if you're right or wrong."

"Yes, they will," interrupted Charlton eagerly; "all the parts I've studied from life have been successes. My only failures have been in situations where I had to rely on my imagination. Oh, if I could only see a fellow thrown over by a girl, I would make the whole theatre rise at me."

Welby puffed a big cloud out of his thick-stemmed briar.

"In that case, my dear boy, your duty is clear. Make love to some girl who is engaged; with your alluring manners you are bound to succeed; then study the poor fellow who is thrown over."

"Don't be a fool," retorted Charlton.

Welby laughed. "Pon my word I don't see how you're going to manage it unless you do that. I almost wish I were engaged, so that you might have a chance of cutting me out. By-the-bye, have you heard that Brown has become engaged to Miss Harding?"

"No; has he?" exclaimed Charlton. "I thought that Figgis was the favoured individual."

"So did most people, but it seems they were wrong. I know Brown himself used to fancy that Miss Harding would never have him, till he had shot his rival or got him married to some one else."

"He's coming here to-night," said Charlton, rising and pulling aside the curtains. "What an atrocious evening! I scarcely expect he'll care about turning out in such wretched weather."

Welby also rose and stretched himself.

"Rum chap, that Brown," he remarked, as he knocked out the ashes of his pipe. "Not a favourite of mine. You mustn't mind my running down a guest of yours—he isn't one yet, though."

"Oh, I don't care two straws about him," replied Charlton; "he seems to have an idea that the whole fun of existence depends on the number of practical jokes he can play off on fellows—jokes of the good old type, like putting a jug of water on the top of a door to fall on your head when you come into his room. He would have made his fortune fifty years ago as a writer of broad farces."

"Has he ever played any tricks on you?" asked Welby, laughing.

"Yes; only two nights ago he asked me to his rooms. I knocked at the door of his sitting-room, and, getting no reply, walked in. The place was empty, so, fancying he must be out for five minutes, I walked in, took a cigar from his box, and

sat down in his big armchair. Half-a-minute afterwards, my cigar disappeared suddenly. Of course he had been hiding behind the chair, but you won't believe what a turn it gave me. I jumped up as if I had been shot, and he laughed till I hoped he was going to have a fit. That's his idea of a joke. I should like to let him see one from the other side."

Welby laughed in a very unsympathetic way, and Charlton couldn't help joining.

"He'll sober down now he's got engaged," remarked the former.

"Let's hope so, or his wife will have a strange sort of existence. Look here, he'll be here in five minutes if he's coming at all; just let me run through that scene again."

Welby complied after various protestations, hoping, he remarked, that the public would derive more enjoyment from the performance than he was obtaining from the rehearsal. But in the middle of the scene he suddenly threw the papers down, exclaiming:

"I have it, my boy; you shall have the scene in real life before you're many minutes older."

"How?"

"Through Brown. You tell him that Figgis has cut him out."

"But he knows that he hasn't."

"No, he doesn't. Listen. I happen to know that Miss Harding is going to-morrow to visit some friends at Liverpool; now it is at Liverpool that Figgis lives."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, Brown hasn't been to see his fiancée to-day, because I met him this morning, and he told me he was going to Woolwich for the day. What you must do is this. Give him to understand that you have heard that Miss Harding at the Days' dance two nights ago was seen in the arms of Figgis, and was heard to promise that she would go down to Liverpool a day earlier than arranged, so as to be able to meet him."

"Yes, but, you know, all this is drawing rather too much on one's imagination."

"It's in a good cause; you will be able to study his conduct. Besides, it's only a joke, and one of his own played back on him. Of course, we will disabuse him in a minute or so, when you've had time to see how he acts. By Jove, here he comes!"

"Mind you back me up," said Charlton hurriedly.

"All right; be careful to observe him

closely. You'll electrify London if you can reproduce the scene afterwards."

There was no time to make further arrangements, for Brown's knock was heard at the door and a moment after he entered.

"Hullo, you fellows!" he cried, "here's a sweet night to ask a man out in. It's raining cats and dogs."

"Very sorry," said Charlton, "but we haven't the superintendence of the weather, or we would have managed it better for you. Take off your coat and sit down."

"Thanks," said Brown, throwing himself into a chair without taking off his coat. Bang! went something with a loud report which made the others start.

"Don't be alarmed," said Brown, laughing hugely; "it isn't dynamite; it's only this." He pulled out the remains of a paper bag that he had blown out and concealed under his coat. "By Jove! how you fellows did start," and he went off into another fit of laughter.

Welby looked at Charlton and gave an expressive look, which was meant to convey that they would be even with him before long.

However, they were careful not to betray their intentions, and Charlton hastened to make his fresh visitor comfortable. They began talking on indifferent subjects till the conversation gradually veered round to Brown's recent engagement.

"Yes," remarked that gentleman, "I'm done for at last. The days of my liberty are over; the lark is imprisoned in its cage, content with its lump of sugar, instead of soaring over the fields, seeking its prey from the hedges."

"That's not bad," remarked Welby, "though a little mixed. You must look upon yourself as a sort of conquering hero."

"Well, yes, to some extent," acquiesced Brown tranquilly. "I can't say I thought she would have me till the very moment came; I'm not one of your handsome men with Greek profile and all that sort of thing. I suppose it is my intellectual powers that carry weight."

"Figgis has a Greek profile," remarked Welby casually.

"Figgis!" exclaimed Brown contemptuously; "I could be angry with that fellow if I were not able to pity him. Poor old Figgis, he would give something to be in my shoes."

Here Charlton and Welby looked at each other, and somewhat ostentatiously heaved

a sigh. Brown heard it and turned round sharply.

"What are you groaning like that for?" he enquired.

"Ask Welby," said Charlton.

"Ask Charlton," said Welby.

"I ask both of you," exclaimed Brown.

However, neither of them answered for a minute or two, but puffed away in silence. Then Welby remarked:

"Miss Harding is going to visit some people at Liverpool, is she not?"

"Yes; what of it?"

"That's where Figgis lives, isn't it?"

"Yes, confound him! He met her there first. She goes down to-morrow, and I run down next day."

"Have you seen her to-day?" asked Charlton.

"No, I've been to Woolwich; besides, she's spending the day at Bayswater."

Another sigh from both of the conspirators. This was more than Brown could stand.

"Look here, you pair of mysterious beings," he said, rising and putting on his hat, "if you don't tell me what all this sighing and mystic signalling mean, I declare I'll go straight home and leave you to heave sighs at each other."

"Now for it!" whispered Welby, whilst Charlton put on his most sympathetic look and began:

"You know, my dear Brown, you are insisting on our telling you, so don't blame us afterwards."

"Fire away!" was his reply.

Thus encouraged, Charlton repeated the story agreed on, Welby every now and then putting in an explanatory word.

"Watch him closely," whispered the latter to the actor.

The crisis came. Charlton explained to Brown how Miss Harding had deceived him, observing narrowly his movements.

There was little to observe. Almost before he had told his story, Brown leapt for the door, leaving his coat behind him. Before the others knew what was happening, he was downstairs and out of sight.

The two friends looked at each other in dismay.

"Here's a mess we're in!" said Charlton. "What shall we do?"

"The question is, what will he do?" returned Welby. "We've no time to lose; we must follow him. Quick!"

Charlton pulled on his boots, seized his hat and coat, and they ran down the stairs together. Not a soul was in sight, the

little street was deserted, but in the distance they heard the sound of the wheels of a cab rapidly becoming fainter and fainter.

"This is getting past a joke," said Welby ruefully.

"It's your fault, at any rate," retorted Charlton; "if you hadn't suggested it I should never have thought of it."

"It's no use disputing whose fault it is; the question is, How can we remedy it? What do you propose?"

"Let's find a cab first; we can talk over what we shall do when we have found one."

"Come along then," assented Welby. "What a beast of a night it is; I shall catch my death of cold."

"Serve you right," growled his companion, turning up the collar of his coat. "We sha'n't get a crawler, I'm afraid, till we reach the Strand. We'd better go to the stand."

"What do you mean to do then?"

"One of us had better drive to Brown's rooms and see if he can find him there; the other must go to Miss Harding's house on the chance of his having gone there."

"And suppose we find him at neither?" asked Welby.

"Then we must go to Liverpool, I suppose, unless we have the good luck to catch him at the station."

Welby gave a whistle. He had not expected to be let in for a journey to the north by the night express.

"Let's see, Liverpool is on the North-Western line, isn't it?"

"Yes; Euston is the station."

"All right, I'll meet you there as soon as I can. You drive to Miss Harding's——"

"No," interrupted Charlton, "you go there; you know her better than I do."

"I don't think I do."

"You've always said so till now," protested Charlton.

"But I don't know her well enough to make an afternoon call at half-past ten."

"You needn't go in. Just ask the servant if Mr. Brown has been there, that's all. Here's the stand, and, thank Heaven! a couple of cabs."

"Four-wheelers!" remarked Welby ruefully.

"We must make them do. Now, in you get; be at Euston as soon as you can in any case, and I'll do the same."

The anticipations of the ride were far from pleasant. The cabs looked wet and musty, the horses worn-out and miserable,

whilst the drivers had evidently been trying to keep the wet out by copious potations. But there was no help for it, so Welby got into one and Charlton into the other, both regretting the cosy room they had so recently left.

CHAPTER II.

It seemed an age to Charlton before he drew up at Brown's chambers. There was no light to be seen in his window, which augured ill. Enquiry of the housekeeper elicited the information that "Mr. Brown had come home in a sorter hurry, and scarcely stayed a minute, and then told her he was going to Liverpool, and that he wouldn't want breakfast in the morning."

This confirmed Charlton's worst fears; his only hope now was to reach the station in time to stop him. He learnt that not more than five or six minutes had elapsed since Brown's departure, so there was still a chance. As he drove on he comforted himself by thinking that trains didn't run very often at that time of night, and that in all probability there would not be one due to start just as Brown reached the station, in that case he would be obliged to wait there, and the chances were in favour of his (Charlton's) arrival in time. This hope was sufficient to render him unconscious of the dampness of the cushions on which he was sitting and to the fact that he was by no means equipped for spending a night away from home.

Euston at last! He jumped out of his crazy vehicle, gave the cabman double his fare because he could not wait to obtain change, and rushed on to the platform. It was deserted; he returned to the waiting-rooms and booking-office; some dozen people were about, but no Brown. Even Welby had not yet appeared; Charlton was alone.

"When did the last train start for Liverpool?" he asked the first official he met.

With provoking slowness the man replied: "About an hour and thirty-five minutes ago, sir."

"You're quite sure?"

"Yes, sir." The question touched his official pride, and he turned away disgusted.

What was the next thing to be done? It was clear Brown had not yet started for Liverpool. There was still the hope that Welby had found the missing man at Miss Harding's. Until one or the other turned up he must wait at the station.

To satisfy his mind he found out the time of the next train to Liverpool; one

started in about three-quarters of an hour.

"Oh, confound it all!" he muttered to himself, "how am I to stand three-quarters of an hour in this wretched place? Just long enough to be a nuisance, just too short to let one go anywhere first. One good thing, I must see Brown or Welby soon."

However, this did not seem so decided a necessity at the end of a quarter of an hour, for neither of them came. Charlton was getting more and more anxious. He looked at the clock, but it seemed to have stopped. His own watch made no more progress. He had never so acutely felt the truth of the simile of the leaden feet of time. At last, when it was nearly twelve, a cab rumbled up to the entrance, but, alas! it did not contain Brown, as for a moment he had hoped; instead there stumbled out the miserable Welby, wet, muddy, and in a bad temper.

"Have you found him?" enquired Charlton eagerly.

"No, you can see that, can't you?"

"You've been to the house?"

"Yes, I wish I hadn't; this fool of a cabman took me to the wrong street and I had to get on the box and help drive, he was as drunk as a lord. This is a nice sort of evening to spend. What are you going to do now?"

"We must go to Liverpool and find out if he's gone to the house where Miss Harding is going to-morrow; if he isn't there we must go to Figgis's place."

"When's the next train?"

"In six minutes—no, five."

"Well, but where's Brown?" ejaculated Welby. "He can't have gone without our seeing him, I suppose?"

Charlton gave an inarticulate gasp and seized a porter going by. "Porter, doesn't the Midland line go to Liverpool?"

"Yes, sir, but this is the best service."

"We're done!" cried Charlton with despair in his look; "whilst we have been waiting here he has started from St. Pancras. We are a couple of born fools!"

"Where's a time-table?" exclaimed Welby, rushing to the office. In a few seconds they found that their fate was almost worse than they had thought. In two minutes from that very moment the Liverpool train from St. Pancras would be moving out of the station.

"This settles it," said Welby in the tone of resigned despair; "we have had about as bad a run of ill-luck as we could well have imagined."

"There's nothing for it but to follow him," said Charlton. "We'd better take our tickets, we haven't a minute to spare."

They bought their return tickets and took their seats in a smoking-carriage. It did not seem long now before they were off. There was no one else in the compartment; the lamp burnt dim, the rain pelted against the windows; looking out into the darkness all they could see was the reflection of their uninviting resting-place.

They did not talk for the first few miles. When they had passed Willesden, however, Charlton threw himself back in the corner and said:

"As we are here, old man, we may as well be as comfortable as we can. Aren't you going to smoke?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Can you let me have a weed?" asked Charlton; "we came away in such a hurry I forgot to put any in my pocket."

Welby dived into his coat-tails but drew back his hand with a smothered groan.

"I've left my case and pouch at your rooms!"

This was a facer; to endure a long night journey without smoking was a terrible thing to anticipate. Welby threw himself back in his corner with a growl.

"Of all the wild-goose chases I ever took part in, this is the wildest," he said.

"It's an awful nuisance, I own," assented Charlton, "but it can't be helped. Just fancy, my dear fellow, what will happen if we don't get hold of him. There will be a scene between him and Miss Harding; he may try and smash Figgis or get smashed himself; there will be a general hullabaloo amongst all their friends; and whatever happens we may be pretty sure that we shall never be forgiven by any of the people concerned. Hang it, man! what would Miss Harding think of us? I should never have the face to see her again."

"She wouldn't mind that much," was Welby's surly rejoinder. "At any rate, I don't much see the good of rattling down to Heaven knows where at this time of night. What do you suppose Brown will do when he gets to Liverpool? 'Twill be too late for him to call where Miss Harding is supposed to be staying."

"He may go on to see Figgis," suggested Charlton.

"I suppose you will be for following him there?"

"I think that will be the wisest thing."

"Very well. I only hope it will be finer weather in Liverpool than it is here, or else that it will be so fearful that even Brown's jealousy will be damped, and he will postpone his visit till the morning."

"I hope he will, but there's no telling what a fellow like Brown will do. He's capable of routing Figgis out of bed and making him fight it out on the spot."

"By-the-bye," said Welby, "where does Figgis live?"

"I don't know," replied Charlton; "I've never been so far north as Liverpool in my life. Don't you know?"

"I?" exclaimed Welby; "I haven't the ghost of an idea."

They looked at each other in dismay.

"Things look bluer than ever," said Charlton. "We shall have to enquire."

"Enquire!" sneered Welby.

"There must be a Liverpool directory," suggested Charlton.

"Perhaps; but he will have called long before we've discovered which Figgis our man is out of the four or five or dozen in the directory. Who are the people with whom Miss Harding is going to stay?"

"Fletcher is the name, I think," said Charlton, "but I haven't an idea of the address. Don't tell me you don't know!"

"I won't tell you if you wish me not to, but all the same I don't know."

Charlton looked more blankly at him than before.

"Why, I thought you were so intimate with the Hardings that you knew all about their friends," he said.

"I don't know the addresses of all the people they know in the country," retorted Welby. "When you said so decidedly that we must call at Figgis's and on the people Miss Harding was going to stay with, I naturally concluded you knew where they lived."

The conversation was assuming a re-criminatory tone. Charlton did not reply to the last speech, but pulled his hat over his eyes and pretended to go to sleep. Welby did the same, and they kept in their respective corners for more than an hour without saying a word.

"I say, Charlton," said Welby suddenly.

"Well?"

"Were you asleep?"

"Oh no; fire away!"

"What had we better do?"

"Go straight back to town, and let the wretched tangle straighten itself as best it can."

"That's my view. This was my first practical joke and it shall be the last."

"We shall only be quits with the fellow after all," said Charlton; "all this wretched journey must count as some sort of set-off to what he has gone through."

"I say, my boy," remarked Welby, with a twinkle of mischief in his eye, "did you get many ideas of the way to act that scene?"

"Oh, the scene——" but he burst out laughing in spite of himself, the remembrance was too comical. "In the piece I have a long scene on the stage after the announcement," he continued, "and that fellow Brown never stayed an instant; 'twas one wild leap for the door and that was all. That may be the way they do it in real life, but if so the author of the play isn't aware of it. Oh, the whole business is a most awful fraud."

Good-humour was, for a time, restored by the recollection of the evening's incidents, but the influence of the hour and surroundings were too powerful; before long they both sank into their former mental condition. Neither of them could sleep; till now they had not tried much, and now that they did try they could not manage it. So they sat and shivered as the train shot swiftly along through the pelting rain, the half-hours dragging wearily along.

"Well, we are a couple of fools," was the first remark made. It came from Welby.

"I dare say we are," replied Charlton, "but what is the latest proof of it?"

"We never looked in the time-table to see whether our train or the Midland one reaches Liverpool first. If ours does, all we have to do is to meet the other, and stop him as he gets out."

"By Jove! there's a slender thread of hope yet. We must ask the guard next time we stop. He may know which arrives first."

"Yes; but how far is it from one station to the other?"

"I haven't an idea; but a cab ought to do it in very little time."

The new hope thoroughly woke them up, and they awaited with eagerness the next opportunity of speaking to the guard. Directly the train stopped Charlton jumped out, and rushed along the platform.

"Does this train or the Midland reach Liverpool first?" he demanded eagerly.

"Midland, sir, five minutes before we do."

Charlton gave a groan of despair.

"It may be late though, sir," added the guard, seeing his disappointment; "them Midland trains often are."

Charlton knew by instinct that this was a libel, merely uttered to calm him, and by way of a thrust at the rival company.

"What time are we due?" he asked.

"Six ten, sir, and we shall be there to the minute."

This, at all events, was comforting, and with this crumb of consolation Charlton tried to be content. But even that was denied him, for, as he roamed along the platform in search of his compartment, he heard an angry voice call out: "Are we going to stop here all night, guard? We're thirteen minutes late already."

Welby saw by his companion's face that the news was not encouraging. There was nothing for it now but to wait, a most aggravating method of passing time. They were tired of talking, both of them were very sleepy, and, as a consequence, considerably out of temper. Charlton was wondering how on earth he was to get back in time for rehearsal; a subject of wonder that lasted him some time, for it was impossible to find a solution of the difficulty. Welby sat in his corner in silence, except when he muttered something to himself that would have been as well left unspoken.

The lights of Liverpool appeared at last. The two unwilling travellers shook themselves thoroughly awake, and gazed into the misty distance.

"One good thing," said Charlton, "we haven't any luggage to bother about."

"I wish to goodness I had," retorted Welby; "I don't at all relish a night out without my bag."

"We had better plan our action," suggested Charlton; "what shall we do directly we arrive?"

"I don't much care. I've reached the state of absolute indifference to everything."

"Oh, nonsense! now we've come so far we must do what we can. We had better take a cab to the Midland station; if we meet Brown's train it's all right, if we don't we will go to the Midland Hotel—I suppose there is one—and see if he's there."

"And supposing he isn't?" asked Welby.

"Then we are at the end of our resources."

"I am glad of that, because I mean to go to bed and get a good night's rest, whatever happens. I feel as if I could sleep for a week."

The minutes seemed to creep on; appa-

rently the train had caught up some of its lost time, for it was now only five minutes past six and they seemed to be in the town. However, the very last part of a journey is generally the slowest, and, as they jumped on to the platform, they noticed that the clock pointed to thirteen minutes past the hour. To seize the first cab, and leap into it, was the work of a second; then there was nothing for it but again to wait.

"I hope to goodness his train is late," said Charlton feverishly.

"Can't hear what you say," shouted Welby, "this cab makes such a row."

"Never mind," shouted back Charlton.

In less time than they anticipated they reached the Midland station. "You pay him," cried Charlton, jumping out before the cab stopped, and rushing down the platform. Welby gave the man a couple of coins without waiting to see if they were sovereigns or shillings, and then ran in pursuit of his companion.

"We're in time," shouted the latter as he approached, "there's been a stoppage on the line."

"That's all right," ejaculated Welby. "How long before the train will be in?"

This necessitated further enquiries. The result was not so gratifying as they could have wished. The train could not possibly arrive for half an hour.

"Half an hour!" exclaimed Welby; "there will be nothing of me left in half an hour. Look here, Charlton, I resign. I'm going to bed."

"Nonsense! if you're so sleepy as that take a nap in the waiting-room, and I'll call you when the train is coming. One of us isn't enough to check everybody; he might slip by without being seen."

"All right; don't forget to wake me." Welby stumbled away, and in two minutes was fast asleep with his head on the table.

The next half-hour was the slowest Charlton had ever spent. It passed at last though, and a porter warned him that in two minutes the train would arrive. He hurriedly woke up Welby, who was in a worse temper than ever at being disturbed, and they took up their positions to check the passengers as they descended.

Five minutes afterwards they might have been seen walking towards the hotel with a look of absolute disgust on their countenances. No Brown was with them, their last hope had failed; they had done all they could, and must rest as satisfied as they were able. They had come two hundred

miles from home to a town where they were absolute strangers; they had missed their night's rest and thoroughly knocked themselves up, and all for nothing. "It was enough to make a man shoot himself," as Welby remarked before tumbling into bed.

Charlton sat up for a few minutes to scribble a couple of telegrams to Brown—one addressed to his rooms, the other to the care of Miss Harding. He explained that the whole affair was a joke, and asked him to call in the evening.

The rehearsal was begun before Charlton left Liverpool; his absencenecessitated a further telegram to the stage-manager. The two friends reached town again after night had fallen, feeling as "sold" and miserable as they well could. They drove to Charlton's chambers, and the first thing they noticed was a note on the table. It ran as follows:

"DEAR CHARLTON,—Very sorry to have left you so unceremoniously last night. I went home, intending to go on to Liverpool, but it struck me on my way to Euston that possibly you might have been joking, so I drove to Miss Harding's to see if she had gone to Liverpool or not arriving at the house two minutes after Welby called. I have annexed a dozen of your Henry Clays' to repay me for the cost of cab-fare. I won't charge you for loss of time. Thanks for your telegram; I will look in to-night and have a chat. Affectionate regards to Welby.—Yours,
 REX BROWN."

"Sweet letter," said Welby. "Do you think he will come to-night?"

"I don't know, but I know I shall be out."

"Perhaps 'twould be wise. By-the-bye, I think you had better act conventionally in future, and not try any more experimental studies from the life. Don't you agree with me?"

Charlton emphatically did.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY.

By ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER CUDLIP).

THE dark days were over. Every field and wood-path round about Railham was a primrose one. The crops, both in field and garden, promised a splendid harvest. Altogether Railham was at its best and brightest when young Dr. Dacre's two sisters came to see him for the first time in his "new home."

They still spoke of it as that, though he had been settled at Railham for two years, for up to that time he had lived at home in the family nest, and had been in practice with his father up in the north of England. But on the father's death the property had to be divided for the good of the family, and Richard Dacres had thought it better to sell the practice, and by this means to secure the comfort and incomes of his maiden sisters, and to trust to his own talents to make one for himself elsewhere.

An opening offered at Railham—a thriving little market-town in Norfolk—and he put himself into the opening promptly, and filled it to the entire satisfaction of himself and his patients.

For two years his sisters had talked at frequent intervals of coming to see him. But the length of the journey, and the expense, to say nothing of their disinclination to move from the place they knew by heart, had stood in the way hitherto. But now at last they had really come to visit their brother in his own house.

His house was a red-brick one, standing back from the street, with a paved court surrounded by narrow beds of old-fashioned shrubs and flowers, and protected from straying footsteps of man or beast by high iron railings in front of it. It had steep steps leading to its front door, and high narrow windows, and was altogether very much like dozens of houses that you may see in any old English market-town.

His household consisted of a working housekeeper, a "handy girl," as the housekeeper was good enough to call her, and a groom. There was about the place a serene atmosphere of peace and content—an air of "going on" as it was, that made the Miss Dacres hope that their brother was going to follow their example, and not burden himself with a wife and large family as their eldest brother had done.

Indeed, they were so pleased with Railham and its friendly, hospitable inhabitants, so happy to be again under the same roof-tree with Dick, that they soon made a proposition, to which he assented heartily, little thinking of the coil of difficulties in which it would involve him by-and-by.

What they proposed was this. That they should give up their present abode in the faraway Northumbrian village; bring their household gods to Railham; and settle down with their brother in the house in the High Street on their united incomes.

The additional servant whom they would provide and pay—a trim and tidy parlour-maid—was the one bit of living furniture that was needed in the doctor's establishment. For the working housekeeper had her hands fully occupied by culinary duties, and the "handy girl," being of an unobtrusive and timid temperament, generally retired to the garret or the washhouse if the surgery-bell was rung with a force and decision that betokened any other than a parish patient.

Moreover, their good old-fashioned furniture, which belonged to a period when massiveness and solidity were in vogue, would fill up the empty rooms and give that air of its occupants being old residents in their home which the Miss Dacres so much esteemed.

Accordingly, as their brother heartily agreed to it, the proposition was speedily carried into effect. It was the time of the earliest spring when the Miss Dacres first came to Railham as guests. It was the time of roses when they journeyed thither the second time to settle down with Dick.

They were both older than the doctor. Indeed, they looked upon him as a boy still, though he was a man of thirty. The elder of the two sisters was at least fifteen and the younger seven or eight years his senior. But they were bright, energetic, strong, healthy, happy-hearted women, with no aggravating "little ways" about them, and Dick Dacre soon found himself surrounded by an undefinable atmosphere of home comfort, to which he had for so long been a stranger.

It was a market-day in Railham, and market-day was always rather an exciting and eventful day for the Miss Dacres. In the first place, everyone from all the region round drove into Railham on that day, for the volunteer band played, and one was sure of meeting everyone else, and altogether it was a gala-day. The great county ladies would come in, and drive about to the stationer's, and the milliner's, and the music-shop, and confectioner's, and chat and laugh with one another in open carriages at shop-doors, or standing by the counters.

The Miss Dacres knew everybody by sight, and many they knew to speak to. Their house was on the sunny side of the street. Their shady, flower-scented drawing-room, with its litter of pretty needle-work, was a charming place for afternoon tea! So it had come to be an established custom with many of those who were

Dick's patients, to finish up their day in Railham before their drive home with a "cup of tea and a chat with the Dacres."

The tea was in full progress, one afternoon, and there was to be heard that sound of ceaseless babble and laughter which indicates satisfaction with both speakers and audience.

The Miss Dacres were enjoying their little feast as usual. They were quite outside any local jealousies, and though they were taken freely into the midst of this society, there still hung about them that subtle charm of being foreign elements, and perfectly independent, which is duly valued by a circle that has grown to be a little monotonous to itself.

The only regret the two sisters felt on these pleasant social afternoons, was that Dick was invariably too much engaged ever to put in an appearance in the drawing-room. For the Miss Dacres took quite an amiable pride in having the room full of "good" people, and of knowing that "all the town could see" the number of carriages, and victorias, and Norfolk-carts that waited about outside their door.

"All this is very good for Dick, it gets him talked about," the affectionate sisters would say in congratulatory tones when their visitors departed; "besides, he'll be thought quite a family man now we are living with him, and people see how homelike and domesticated it all looks."

This they would say to each other approvingly, but if any rash acquaintance chanced to suggest that it would be a good thing for young Dr. Dacre if he took a wife, and became a family man in reality, the suggestion was scouted by the sisters as being utterly unworthy of the object, and derogatory to their care of him.

It happened on this particular market-day that Dr. Dacre broke through his rule of avoidance of his sisters' afternoon tea-party, and came in, greatly to their delight and surprise, at quite an early stage of the entertainment.

Just for a moment Miss Dacre had a qualm! She could not help wishing either that Mrs. Gower had not brought her pretty young daughter Nina with her this day, or that Dick had deferred coming in until the Gowers had departed.

Not but what the Gowers were unexceptionable people, quite "good people" by birth, station, and income. But Nina would never do for the wife of a struggling, rising young professional man, Miss Dacre assured herself, and in the same flush of

thought almost, she reflected that "Dick was not a marrying man, no need to fear for him."

Pretty Nina Gower had a very slight acquaintance with Dr. Dacre, though she often came with her mother to have a chat "with those nice old maids," his sisters. Nina was in the first flush of her youth and beauty, in the first ecstasy of delight at the success that youth and beauty commanded. She had only "come out" the previous winter, but she had come out royally!

Her first recognised appearance in public had been at a grand ball, given in honour of Royalty. Nina had waltzed with princes at this ball, and ever since had been much flattered, followed, courted, bored, by admiration, and remark, and attention. But she was a sensible girl, and kept her head wonderfully. Only, it is not astonishing that she should not take the vivid interest in Dr. Dacre which his sisters feared she might.

But presently the habit of her sex made her a little more observant of the only man present. She had given him a cool little bow when he came near her in his own drawing-room, and he had begun talking to her mother as indifferently as if she (Nina) were a thousand miles away. She was not weak, or vain, or exacting, or selfish, but she had very recently waltzed with princes, and they had thought her worth looking at and talking to!

She was a very pretty girl, and a distinguished-looking girl, which was even better than the prettiness. Her golden-brown hair was long and immensely thick. Her oval face was of that creamy tint which lights up into lily-leaf fairness by artificial light; her eyes were as blue as the Germander speedwell; and her figure and carriage were graceful as could be desired. On the whole, it was rather odd that Dr. Dacre should stand within a couple of yards of her, for the first time in his life, for fifteen or twenty minutes without once looking at her.

He was talking seriously and earnestly enough to her mother, so that Nina could venture a glance in his direction without any fear of the glance being marked by him, and attributed to undue interest. What a nice, firm, dark, earnest, thoughtful, observant face he had, to be sure! It made her feel quite sympathetic with his unknown subject, and a little regretful about her cool little bow. Something of these feelings manifested themselves in

her expression, and Miss Dacre, catching sight of this, in an instant felt quite alarmed.

"My dear Miss Gower, you are quite tired; you're too much in the sun, I'm sure. The spring afternoon sun is so very trying; I suppose the fact is, we're not accustomed to heat and brightness after the long winter days. Come over here and look at my mantelpiece and fire-place curtains for the summer."

So she gabbled away, full of good intentions, and managed to draw Nina out of Dr. Dacre's vicinity before he had time to bestow a look or thought upon her.

He was called out to the surgery a minute after this, and before he came back Mrs. Gower had taken her daughter away. Nina was the charioteer, driving a perfect pair of small bay cobs in a way that called forth a good deal of admiring remark as they passed through Railham on their way to their own place, Blindon Hall.

"What a very sensible, good, kind young man Dr. Dacre seems to be," Mrs. Gower began; "he was telling me of an accident that happened only this afternoon, and I could tell from the way he spoke that his heart is quite in his work."

"I wanted to hear what he was saying," Nina confessed, and then added with a smile: "but his sister harpooned me, and carried me off to look at some crewel-work."

"It really is very sad; a circus came in to the town this morning, and one of the young women riders was practising a jump she was to take to-night when the horse slipped, and came down with such violence that she was shot yards over its head. She hadn't recovered consciousness when he came home, and the people she's travelling with seem very hard about it. They say she's only just joined their company. They know nothing about her, and can't be troubled to do much for her. Dr. Dacre came home to ask his sisters to let her be taken to their house; he says he can attend to her better there, and she can have proper nursing and food."

Nina checked her cobs as soon as her mother ceased speaking.

"How good of him! I could see he was generous, and manly, and good all the time he was speaking to you. Let us go and see if we can help him—I mean help the poor girl. His sisters won't like having her taken there, I'm sure; they'll think of the trouble she may be in the future—not, like him, of the good they may do

in the present. Where is she, mother? Do let us go."

Mrs. Gower rarely refused a request made by her daughter. Accordingly, now she mentioned the name of the hotel to which the poor injured circus-rider had been carried, and thither with all speed Miss Gower drove.

Their enquiries for the young person who had met with an accident were answered by the landlady of Quibbs's Hotel herself.

"Yes; the case has been brought here, Mrs. Gower—brought here by Dr. Dacre's request. If it hadn't been Dr. Dacre's case, I don't think she'd have been taken in. Strollers are not the class of customers Quibbs's likes to have."

"We've come to see if we can help Dr.— help the poor girl," Nina said, giving the reins to the groom, and jumping out of the carriage as she spoke. Then, with fine obliviousness of the presence of the landlady, she went on: "Fancy the heartlessness of it, mother, doubting whether they'd have taken her in, if Dr. Dacre hadn't sent her here. If she can be moved we'll take her to Blindon, won't we, and I'll nurse her?"

"Is Dr. Dacre here now?" Mrs. Gower asked, disregarding her daughter's last impetuous proposition.

"No, ma'am, he's not come back yet; he went to fetch his sisters, I think. The poor thing might be a lady by the fuss that's being made about her," the landlady said, thinking resentfully of Nina's remark anent the heartlessness of Quibbs's.

"Perhaps she is suffering quite as much as a lady could," Miss Gower said impatiently; "do let us see her, mother," and then, as the landlady constrained her indignant spirit to pioneer them upstairs to where the maimed circus-rider was lying, Nina whispered: "If she can be moved we'll have her at Blindon, won't we? You can see that she will only have grudging attention here."

"Wait, darling," Mrs. Gower murmured, for experience had taught her that it was not always wise to allow herself to be hurried into action by her daughter.

Then the bedroom door was opened, and they found themselves in the room with the object of their visit.

Two women belonging to the "troupe" were standing by the bed, and were waiting anxiously for the doctor's verdict.

They stepped back as the ladies came into the room, and Nina saw at once

that, anxious as they were, they were not sympathetic.

"How is she?—conscious yet?" Mrs. Gower asked tenderly, for at the first glimpse of the fair face on the pillow, her womanly heart yearned towards the sufferer.

"Only partial," the elder of the two women replied curtly. Then she added: "A rare bad job this, to be sure; she was the prettiest rider we'd ever had in the company, not so much for tricks, though she's quick enough at learning them, as for regular out-and-out daring riding. She'd have been a fortune to my husband, and now this has happened!"

"She may recover soon," Mrs. Gower said, while Nina hastily passed round the bed, and bent down close to the still, fair face.

It was a very lovely young face, pallid and drawn as it was now. Blood and earth, which they had not been able to wash away yet, matted a good deal of the rich chestnut hair together, but the little tendril-like curls that fell over her forehead were fine and silky as an infant's. The shape of her face was a full oval, the forehead broad and low, and well divided from the still closed eyes by brows a shade or two darker than the chestnut. Her nose was probably of the "tip-tilted" order, but this could scarcely be seen from the position of her face on the pillow. Her mouth was not small, but the upper lip was exquisitely short, and its curved lines were perfection.

No wonder that a good, kind, observant man like Dr. Dacre had taken such an interest in this patient.

Nina Gower drew her glove off, and laid her hand on the girl's forehead. At the touch the one on the bed opened her eyes, lovely dark-grey eyes, and the two looked at each other.

"Are you much hurt, can you tell me where?" Nina murmured, and the girl, in a voice that had less tremble in it than had her interrogator's, answered:

"I don't know—my head aches—what is it has happened?"

"Why you've had a nasty fall from the blue roan mare, Miss Delarue, and given us all a fine fright," the elder woman, who was the wife of the owner and manager of the company, replied, stooping forward.

"The blue roan? I thought—I thought——" She paused, and with an effort got her hand up to her head.

"Is Nell Gwynn hurt? has she cut her knees?"

"Ah! wandering still; we haven't a horse in the stud called Nell Gwynn," the manager's wife said, shaking her head solemnly, but Nina Gower had quicker intuitions.

"Nell Gwynn is your horse—your own?" she said quickly, speaking into the girl's ear so that those around should not hear her.

"She is my own," the other replied wonderingly. Then she tried to lift her head from the pillow, and fell back faint and speechless from the attempt.

"She'll never be no use to us any more—never, never," the manager's wife said impatiently, and once more Nina muttered:

"Mother darling! let us take her when she can be moved;" and as she pleaded thus Dr. Dacre came in.

He was more than surprised when he saw whose graceful form was leaning over his new patient. Never before had Nina Gower looked so lovely in his eyes as she did now. There was no cool little bow vouchsafed to him now. Nina went round to meet him, and held out her hand.

"Mother told me what had happened, and I would come; you're not vexed, are you? We may be useful really if you'll tell us how to be. She mustn't stay here, let her come to Blindon?"

He merely smiled and said, "My dear Miss Gower!" but he liked her rarely well for the aid she had proffered, and the way she had proffered it. Then he went over to his patient, and took her limp wrist in his hand, and bent down to listen to her breathing.

"Will she——" Nina had followed him to ask this half question eagerly.

"Live? Yes, I hope so—I think so," he said, looking round quickly at Miss Gower, and then the mutilated girl opened her eyes again, and stared, frightened, at the strange man's face that was bending over her.

He poured some restorative down her throat, and presently she asked in that wonderfully controlled voice of hers:

"Who are you? What is it all?" Then he told her briefly and clearly all that had happened to her since she came to Railham this morning. And the narrative evidently recalled to her mind much that had happened to her before, for the look of perplexity vanished, and in its place one of sad thoughtfulness reigned.

There was silence for a few moments when he ceased speaking, then she asked:

"Is Nell Gwynn hurt?"

"The blue roan is all right, Miss Delarue," the manager's wife answered, pressing forward, and the girl on the bed made a movement expressive of satisfaction with her lips, and a smile flew over her face.

"Is she to be moved to your house?" Mrs. Gower asked in a low voice, and when he shook his head in the negative, and then muttered something about his "sisters thinking it better that she should remain where she was," Nina pleaded again.

"Mother, mother! do make him let us take her to Blindon."

The girl on the bed heard the entreaty and understood it. With an effort she raised her head from the pillow, and fixing her eyes beseechingly on Nina, cried:

"Do you take me—yes, do, you will; won't you?"

"After that you have no appeal if she may be moved," Nina said, coming swiftly to her side. "Mother will go home and send the carriage for us, and I'll stay here with Miss Delarue till it comes."

"So be it," Dr. Dacre assented, and in his heart he was glad that his interesting patient would be under the charge of the impulsive Miss Gower, rather than with his more cautious sisters.

In due time the carriage came from Blindon, and Miss Gower had the satisfaction of seeing the journey performed with no pain and but little uneasiness to the injured girl.

Nina Gower did nothing by halves. She had brought the suffering girl with sisterly care and tenderness to her own home, and as a sister she caused the stranger to be served and treated. A room adjoining her own, and fitted up with all the luxuries her own contained, was the one apportioned to Miss Delarue, and here late on the afternoon of the day after the accident, Nina sat embroidering by her new friend's bed.

Miss Delarue was getting on well; so well that Dr. Dacre had given her permission to talk—which she would have done whether he had given his permission or not. The injuries turned out to be less terrible than had been at first supposed. One arm was broken, and one rib, and her head was a good deal cut and bruised. But she had youth, and a splendid constitution, and she was doing well.

"How nice it is to be in a house like this again, and to have linen like this on once more," she said complacently, holding up her uninjured arm, and looking with pleasure at her own white, well-shaped little

hand, protruding from a sleeve covered with embroidery and lace.

Nina looked up quickly, then threw down her work, and stood up by the side of the bed.

"Are you going to tell me?" she asked simply, taking the circus-rider's little hand in her own, and the girl clasped Miss Gower's hand warmly, and drew her nearer.

"I will tell you, and when I have told you, you will pity me, and won't send me home, I know you won't. I can tell at a glance if a person's to be trusted, and I know you are, and so is Dr. Dacre. Now for my story. My name isn't Delarue. That you guessed at once, didn't you? I wanted a name in a hurry, and I saw that stamped on a packet of envelopes, so I took it, it's the only thing that didn't belong to me that I've ever taken in my life. Was it thieving?"

"No," Nina didn't think it was.

"Well, my real name is Tierney, and my home, or what was my home once, is a dear old place in Warwickshire—Priors Dene, it's called. My father and mother both died of fever ten years ago, and then my only brother Archibald came into the property. There were only two of us, and Archie was the dearest——"

A burst of tears stopped the story here, and, for sympathy, Nina wept too. They were both crying away most contentedly when Dr. Dacre came in, and as the patient "felt he could be trusted," she continued the telling of her tale presently, when she came shining out from her tear-fall like the sun after a shower.

"Archie was the dearest brother that ever lived. He was eight or nine years older than I, and when I left school he made me quite mistress of Priors Dene, and took me everywhere with him. That's why I ride so well. I hunted three times a week in the season, from the time I left school, and before that, when papa was alive, I always had good ponies as a child, and a dear little cob as a girl. But, while I lived with Archie, I always had the best light-weight carriers that money could buy, and Nell Gwynn's the most perfect of the lot. I can't tell you about my life at Priors Dene with Archie," she went on, her voice growing hoarse with emotion; "it was too happy, too bright in every way while my brother lived. He was engaged to be married to such a dear girl, and the wedding dresses even were made, when he caught some dreadful illness on

top of a bad cold, and died before I knew he was in danger.

"Before I could hold my head up or think of anything but that I had lost my brother, papa's brother came to claim the property, and make Priors Dene his home. He isn't a bad man on the whole, but his wife, my aunt, is a wretch.

"She began preaching at me directly she came, telling me how dreadful it was that neither my father nor my brother had made any provision for me, and talking at me about hunting and Archie's extravagance till I flamed at her, and we had a quarrel and said awful things to each other. I think I said the worst things, because all I said was true.

"Will you believe it," she continued, opening her lovely grey eyes very wide, and raising herself up on her elbow in her excitement, "they said my own dear mare, Nell Gwynn, that Archie had given me, wasn't mine any more. They put their own eldest daughter on the mare—put a girl who sat like a ball in the saddle, and who looked idiotic from terror, on Nell Gwynn! And the mare has such perfect manners that she didn't do what I would have done—thrown the pretender, and kicked her to death!"

Her eyes flashed furiously as she spoke, and Dr. Dacre interposed:

"If you must dramatise your story, we cannot listen to it, Miss Tierney; you must keep quiet."

She moved her head impatiently, but continued more calmly:

"Well, Nell Gwynn didn't do what I would have done, but carried her poor, helpless, stupid burden about, till the sight maddened me. Other things maddened me too. My aunt cut off all my friends; those who were nearest and dearest to me were not admitted to Priors Dene."

There was such stifled pain and wrath in her voice as she said this, that Dr. Dacre started. His patient had stabbed him unintentionally by her passionate regret.

"I'm getting tired, and I'll tell you quickly," Miss Tierney went on. "One night we had a great row. My aunt told me that a Mr. Charles Lewis, Archie's greatest friend, was going to ride the next day with her daughter Hester, and that Hester was to ride my Nell Gwynn! She shouldn't do that, I was determined; so after dinner that day I dressed myself in my habit, and took all the bracelets and rings mamma had left me—I had no money—and went out to the stable and saddled

Nell Gwynn myself while the grooms were at supper, and rode away to a town where I knew there was a circus at the time.

"I showed them how I could ride, and I got them to move away that same night by giving them a lot of my jewellery; and I've bound myself and Nell Gwynn to stay with them for three years; only they don't know her as Nell Gwynn. I changed her name as I changed my own, and called her 'Blue Ruin' and myself 'Delarue'! That's my story, Miss Gower. Do you think I'm a very silly, hateful girl?"

"I think you must make up your mind to give up the circus and stay here with us," Nina said warmly. Then she went away to look for her mother and tell Miss Tierney's true story, in order that Mrs. Gower might be ready with the invitation which Nina was resolved should be given.

Meanwhile the doctor was alone with his patient.

"Do you think me a very silly, hateful girl?" she asked seriously. "What I did was wrong, I know; I ought to have stayed in my uncle's house, and have borne everything from my aunt, and have seen my cousin ride my mare and monopolise my——"

She paused, and he asked quietly: "Your 'household rights,' were you going to say?"

"You know very well, Dr. Dacre, that I was not going to say anything of the kind," she retorted impatiently; "but no matter. Well, I couldn't stand patiently by and see Nell Gwynn badly ridden, and my friends tricked into seeming friendliness with Hester. My life had been so free, so happy, and so successful before with dear Archie, you can't wonder that I felt the loss of other things more keenly after I had lost him."

"I should like to see everything you loved and valued restored to you."

"They never can be," she interrupted hastily, "at least, not all I loved and valued; my brother and my home are gone for ever."

"Your friends are left; you wouldn't hide yourself away from them?"

"If you mean my uncle and his perfidious wife and daughter, I'll tell you this at once—wild horses shall not drag me back to them."

"You spoke of other friends, Miss Tierney."

"He can find me if he cares to take the trouble to search and follow," she said, blushing a little, and Dr. Dacre's heart

throbbed painfully. The "friends" whom his bewitching patient lamented so deeply were all condensed into that one "he."

"I shall, with your permission, make all necessary arrangements with the manager to-day, and give him to clearly understand that your engagement must be cancelled," he said presently.

"Oh, don't! I shall forfeit the mare if you do. Nell Gwynn's the only bit of the old life that's left to me; don't let me lose the mare," she said piteously.

"I will take care of her interests as well as of yours. Nell Gwynn is at this moment in my own stable, and there she will remain till you are well enough to ride her."

She caught his hand and hugged it as a grateful child might have done, only, unfortunately for him, she was not merely a grateful child, she was a beautiful and attractive young woman.

"I can never do enough for you, Dr. Dacre. First you save my life, then you save my mare. How good you are! How I ought to love you!"

He brought his professional visit to a close soon after this, leaving his fair patient with Mrs. Gower and Nina. The daughter of the house had carried her point, and Mrs. Gower pleaded as earnestly as even Nina desired that Kate Tierney should remain with them.

"But it must all be fair and above-board, Nina," her father insisted. "I'll write to her uncle and your mother shall write to her aunt, and if her story holds water when we've heard the other side, then this shall be her home, and I'll treat her as a daughter as far as is consistent with my duty to you."

"Don't write to those people till I'm strong enough to speak for myself if they come here after me," Kate Tierney pleaded; and her plea was granted.

Meanwhile Dr. Dacre visited her daily. Visited her, he admitted to his own heart, long after there was any surgical or medical excuse for his doing so. Kate was soon sound in limb and flesh, but she remained weak and languid, and this without any physical cause that he could discover. At times she would be vivacious enough, and in her vivacious moods she was invariably grateful and tender and affectionate towards him, therefore he longed for their reappearance when they were over, for their continuance when they reappeared.

But though he longed for them and enjoyed them, and was miserable when they were superseded by periods of languor

and depression, these tender vivacious moods of Kate Tierney's were dangerous to him in the present, and might be destructive in the future. In short, he was allowing himself to love the girl of whom he knew so little—of whom he knew nothing, in short, save that she was lovely and wilful; and though he guarded his secret from others, he did not hide it from himself.

He guarded it so well from others that, though it absorbed his mind and thoughts to the exclusion of everything that was not connected with his professional duties, not even his sisters suspected it. Or, rather, they did not suspect that the "circus-rider," as they still called her, had anything to do with it, but rather feared that Dick's frequent visits to Blindon were made in the forlorn hope of winning the heiress of Blindon to be his wife.

It hurt their pride wofully to think that their brother Dick should be wasting his heart, as they considered it, on a girl like Nina, who, they decided, would only marry for love if ambition could be gratified at the same time. It never occurred to them that Nina was foolish enough to find sweet delight in cherishing the same mistake that vexed them, namely, that Dr. Dacre came to Blindon so often because she was there.

They were all blind. As the summer days rolled, and the evenings stretched themselves out, every spare hour that Dr. Dacre had on those evenings was spent by him under the verandah at Blindon, smoking with Mr. Gower, or reading and talking with the girls. And all the while Kate Tierney went on imploring them all to "wait just a little longer" before they told her people of her whereabouts.

Kate's secret was well kept. Not even to his own sisters did Dick mention that the circus-rider after whom they occasionally enquired was in reality a well-born young lady, and now the chosen friend and constant companion of Miss Gower, of Blindon. The vigilant sisters had an idea that the girl was up at Blindon hovering between the lady's-maid's sanctum and the housekeeper's room.

As for Nell Gwynn, they knew nothing about her. Their tastes were not horsey, and they never visited their brother's stables.

It was inevitable, under such circumstances, that mists of misconception should thicken on all sides. Mr. Gower began to grow not exactly displeased, and not ex-

actly alarmed, but a little perplexed on the subject of the frequency of the young doctor's visits.

"I'm delighted to see him, and I think Dacre a very good fellow; but why does he come so often?" Mr. Gower asked his wife, and she with more delicate discernment than was evinced by any of the others, replied:

"It's impossible to say with certainty, but perhaps he prizes what he has saved. Kate is very lovely, and he's not blind."

"You think it's Kate?"

"Why, surely, you don't think it's Nina?" her mother asked quickly.

"Don't you make so sure that I'm wrong and you're right, old lady," her husband said, shaking his head sagaciously. "I'm very much mistaken if Nina's not of my opinion too; and I'm afraid she doesn't regard it quite in the same light as I do. She was wonderfully willing to give up going to town this summer; what did that mean?"

"It meant that she's not a frivolous girl, and that she can well afford to wait," her mother said proudly.

"It meant that she was a great deal too well pleased to stay down here within daily reach of Dr. Dacre," Mr. Gower said, shaking his head ominously, and the mother resolved to speak to her daughter without delay.

Just before this, Kate had empowered them to write to her relatives, and the situation was made more complicated by the fact of the relatives not having yet made any sign.

Kate had also, without consulting any one, written to that friend of her late brother's, Mr. Charles Lewis, whose riding with her cousin had been the last straw which had broken down her endurance. She had written to him in an unexceptionable strain, treating him with just the shade of confidence and familiarity with which a girl who had known him well, and regarded him as her brother's friend, should treat him.

Nevertheless, as soon as her letter was posted, she regretted having written it.

"Better he should miss me for ever than that I should have put him on my own track," she told herself. Still, as she had put him on her own track, she did long to hear that he was following her up.

One day, after waiting more than a week for an answer, and no answer coming, she told Dr. Dacre what she had done.

"Well?" he said curtly when she had told him.

"Well! that's not at all an encouraging mode of receiving my communication," she laughed, and pouted. "Can't you say something more—something pretty?"

"What would you have me say, Miss Tierney?" he asked sadly.

"Oh, don't be low-spirited," she cried impatiently; "I only thought that you as a man might be able to suggest some reason for his not having written to me."

"He may not have had your letter."

"Nonsense! that's not it. Do you think—do you think he is furious because I ran away?"

"Had he the right to be?"

"Don't speak in that graveyard tone, Dr. Dacre; it isn't so solemn as all that. I assure you if Charley Lewis has forgotten me, and is on with a new love, I have it in me to——"

She hesitated, but he would not help her on by a question.

"I have it in me to follow his example," she resumed presently, and then, rather to her annoyance, Nina came in, for there was something in Dr. Dacre's manner and expression that was very soothing to lonely Kate this day.

The opportunity which Mrs. Gower professed to be seeking of speaking to her daughter came, and the mother took it, sorely against her inclination.

"Dear Nina, do you think our pretty little Kate will make up her mind to settle near us?" she began nervously.

"Oh no, mother, how should she? She's longing for the day when Mr. Charles Lewis will follow and find her, and take her back in triumph as his wife to crow over her discomfited cousin."

"Mr. Charles Lewis has had plenty of time to find her, since we wrote to her uncle and aunt."

"They mayn't have told him that they have heard from you. Kate was speaking to me about it last night, and she said they were 'capable of any meanness in order to compass their own ends and catch Charles Lewis for Hester.' Kate has firm faith in his fidelity, though he does seem to us to be rather lax in his quest of her."

"Don't you think," Mrs. Gower began hesitatingly, "that what looks to you like patience may be indifference? Has it struck you that Dr. Dacre may be consoling Kate for Mr. Lewis's defection?"

"No, it hasn't," Nina said with prompt decision, and Mrs. Gower's heart fell. Her

daughter would not speak with such certainty were she in doubt.

"Nina must think that he comes here to see her, and Nina isn't one to think of a man who isn't ready to surrender himself to her," the mother thought, and her spirits sank at the prospect of the difficulties that might be placed in Nina's path by her father.

The struggle must be made, that "one word more" must be said.

"My dear Nina, if you feel sure that he doesn't come here to see Kate Tierney, for whose sake does he come? Will you answer me that?"

"For mine!"

"Oh, Nina, your father feared——"

"No, no, mother dear; I won't listen to anything that may sound narrow and illiberal. My father will never 'fear' anything about Dr. Dacre when he comes to know him better, the feeling can't exist concerning him. Dear mother, if he satisfies me, surely all the rest of the world may be satisfied."

"I wish that accident had never happened," Mrs. Gower said fervently, but as Kate Tierney was quite recovered now, Nina Gower would not echo that fervent aspiration.

It may be questioned how she could have fallen into such an error. The answer is easy enough. Her beauty was incontestably greater than Kate's. Why should it not have won Dr. Dacre's love, especially as she desired to win it? Moreover, in his dread of betraying himself prematurely to Kate Tierney, he had fallen into the habit of addressing himself chiefly to Nina. He attributed all that was sweet and kind in Nina's manner to him, to her sympathy with the affection he felt for her fascinating friend. And so the web of misunderstanding was added to daily.

Day after day Dr. Dacre almost made up his mind to speak out to Kate. Day after day Nina told herself "he will say something to me soon." More closely than ever did he "hang about" after the daughter of the house now, for he was longing to break the ice with her first, and get some words of encouragement from her. And she, happy in her belief that she was that all to him for which his soul did pine, treated him with such sweet kindness that he fancied she had fathomed the depth of his feeling for Kate, and approved of and sympathised with it.

The long-looked-for letter from Priors Dene came at last. Mr. and Mrs. Tierney

were very grateful (they said) for the Christian care which had been bestowed on their utterly unworthy niece. They would have expressed this gratitude before, had not family affairs of great moment engrossed all their time and thoughts. When they explained to Mr. and Mrs. Gower that their eldest daughter was about to enter into a matrimonial engagement, Mr. and Mrs. Gower would understand, as parents, how completely they had been absorbed in preparing for it. They felt that they could not conscientiously condone Kate's offences against society and themselves by inviting her to their daughter's nuptials with Mr. Charles Lewis, but at the same time they wished her kind protectors to understand that they cherished no ill-will against the misguided girl, and were quite prepared to allow a handsome maintenance, namely, fifty pounds a year.

"The poor child shall never touch or want a farthing of their money," Mr. Gower said emphatically, banging his hand on the table in his vehemence; "she shall be my charge now."

Poor Mrs. Gower said nothing. She was considering how she could best break the bitter tidings of Mr. Charles Lewis's approaching marriage to Kate.

She told Nina of it first, and Nina's eyes grew wet in a moment.

"Poor darling! it will half kill her; she never dreams that he is less faithful than herself; oh, mother, I did so hope we were all going to be happy."

"You still think that she will not console herself?"

"With whom should she console herself?" Nina asked quickly.

"Once before I suggested with Dr. Dacre."

Nina laughed.

"That's too absurd; I'm afraid I'm not a female Quixote—I can't offer to surrender him to her."

Mrs. Gower sighed. She was an outsider, a looker-on. But she had watched the two narrowly of late, and—she was not love-blinded, as was her daughter.

"Who shall tell Kate about her cousin's marriage?" This was the burning question now. Presently Nina settled it.

"Dr. Dacre shall do it, mother; he knows nothing of her penchant for Mr. Charles Lewis, and therefore the information will drop quite naturally from his lips, and her pride will keep her up, she won't let him see how she feels it. Now before me she would break down, for she

has talked to me of him, and she knows I know that she loves him."

"It's a tangled skein," Mrs. Gower sighed.

When Dr. Dacre called that day at Blindon, he found himself waylaid on the terrace by Nina.

"Don't go in for a minute or two," she began with that perfectly confidential manner which was born of her firm belief in his love, and which he misinterpreted to mean the purest friendship. "Don't go in for a minute or two. I want to say something about Kate."

"I'll gladly stay with you for hours, you know that." So he would have done to hear about Kate!

She smiled and blushed happily.

"I'm going to ask you to do some very disagreeable work for me. Will you do it?"

"Anything in the world that I can do for you, I will, Miss Gower."

He meant what he said honestly. He did adore her for her goodness to Kate Tierney.

"It's just this. Father and mother have had this letter" (she handed it to him) "from her uncle and aunt to-day. Mr. Lewis is going to marry Kate's cousin; I want you to break the bad news to her."

He could not answer her, his heart throbbed too tumultuously with mingled joy and hope, and doubt and pity. So he made a feint of reading the letter attentively for a minute or two, and while he read it Nina gathered some violets, and hoped he would ask her for them.

Presently he gave the letter back to her, saying:

"It's a vulgar, heartless epistle; poor girl, how she must have suffered with those people! I will do as you ask me. Where is she now?"

"I left her in the drawing-room; it's a horrid task to impose on you, but I knew you would do it for me, and I'm a coward about hurting dear Kate myself."

"I don't think—I mean I trust she will feel that he's not worth a sigh," Dr. Dacre said with kindling eyes. But Nina shook her head, and seemed to think that Kate would be very love-lorn.

"He needn't have been in such a hurry," Nina thought, as Dr. Dacre went away on his mission. But she reflected that his haste was only caused by his impatience to get back to her, and so was satisfied.

He found Kate in the drawing-room where Nina had left her, half asleep, with

a book, as an excuse for sitting still, drooping from her hand.

At Dr. Dacre's entrance she roused herself into animation. Truth to tell, now that she was well and strong again, the days at Blindon lacked excitement and were very long. There were many minutes in every day when Kate wished herself back with the circus company. To her colleagues of the ring she had been a mystery, and her appearance on Neil Gwynn never ceased to create a sensation among them. Here at Blindon she was beginning to be accepted as quite in the order of things, and she found it dull.

Consequently she was beginning to look upon Dr. Dacre's visits as the most agreeable episodes in her daily life, and so she gave him a cordial welcome.

"You are good to come out in this heat," she began, moving a little in order to let him sit down on the sofa by her side. "Nina has been prowling in and out as if she didn't feel it, but I like to take very hot weather as it's meant to be taken, quietly and coolly; so I settled down here with a book."

"And now I've come to disturb you, Kate."

He had fallen into the habit of calling her "Kate," as all the Gowers did, and she rather liked the fraternal familiarity, and felt strongly inclined to call him "Dick" in return.

"I like being disturbed by you, do you know," she said caressingly; "though Nina's was the first face I saw after my tumble, you were my first friend here in reality. I shall never forget that."

"I wish I might look after you all the rest of my life," he said earnestly, forgetting the mission on which he had been sent.

She shook her head.

"It would be very good for me if you could, but I can't expect to stay at Blindon much longer. Some of them from home will surely hunt me out before long," she replied, misunderstanding him wilfully perhaps.

"Are you anxious for them to do so, Kate? Do you want them to find you and take you away?"

"I will never be taken away by my uncle and aunt."

When she said that he remembered what he had come to tell her about Mr. Charles Lewis and her cousin Hester.

"Your uncle and aunt are cold-hearted, selfish people. That is no news to you,

you have always declared them to be such. Mr. and Mrs. Gower have heard from them to-day."

Then as quietly as he could he told her the contents of the letter.

At the first mention of her cousin's approaching marriage, Kate started, but when he told her the name of the man who was to marry Hester, Kate gave no sign of emotion or interest. She kept tight hold of the book with untrembling fingers, and held her face so that he could only see her profile. There was nothing to be read in the downcast eyes or the firmly-closed lips.

When he had finished his recital, she still being silent, after a little pause, he went on:

"You see in their selfishness they are glad to be rid of you; they don't want you, and I want you so much. Let me take care of you all my life, stay as my wife, Kate."

A sharp struggle was going on in the girl's mind. She had been so long accustomed to look upon Charley Lewis as the lawful captive of her bow and spear, that to hear of him as her cousin's accepted husband gave her a pang. At the same time she recognised, in the midst of her pain and mortification, that she had never felt real, devoted, lasting love for him.

These were some of the thoughts that coursed rapidly through her brain while Dr. Dacre was pleading his cause in rather jerky sentences.

"Are you sure?—isn't it Nina you want?" she said doubtfully, when she was obliged to speak.

"I never wanted anyone till I saw you, and I've never ceased wanting you from that moment," he said truthfully.

"Good gracious! fancy going on 'wanting' in silence so long, and behaving all the time just as if you hadn't wanted me. I always thought it was Nina," she repeated pensively, but she was too loyal to word the fear she had that Nina had thought the same.

"But now you know, you believe me, don't you, that it never was Miss Gower?" And he added something foolish relative to the impossibility of its being Miss Gower, or Miss anyone else, after his having once seen Kate.

"What will your sisters say?"

"That is a subject I can't bring myself to consider," he laughed; but, in wrenching Charley Lewis out of her heart, Kate had also wrenched out all the romance

that might ever have been in her. She would be nothing henceforth if not practical.

"But it's a subject we must both consider if I am to be your wife"—here he took her hand, and she let him do it—"your sisters are well off, and they live with you and help you. Now, I'm ill off, for that fifty pounds a year won't even pay for my dresses, and if I marry you I can't help you."

"That fifty pounds a year shall remain in your uncle's pocket. I shall be able to pay for my wife's dresses unaided, I think," he said gleefully. And then Kate let him understand that she would consider herself engaged to him, but distinctly forbade anything like "love-making."

"You'll go on coming here just as usual, till it's convenient to be married, and till then we'll make no difference. It's been a happy time at Blindon, I don't want it altered a bit, so we'll just go on as we have gone on, only I'll tell Mrs. Gower and Nina that we are going to be married." She was saying this in her firm clear tones, as Nina walked in through the open French window, and it never occurred to Kate to lower her voice.

So Nina heard it.

Even if she had not heard it she would have read it in the man's happy face, and successful bearing. He had won his love! All Nina had to do was to bear the loss of hers.

Nina was a real woman, and never was she truer and more womanly than in the days that ensued, when, with unflagging interest and untiring zeal, she went with her mother about the task of providing a liberal trousseau for Dr. Dacre's cool young betrothed.

She even won his sisters to regard Miss Tierney as what she was, and not as the circus-rider she had seemed to be. And she delicately taught Dr. Dacre to believe that she liked and esteemed him ever so much more now that he had shown such discretion in his choice. But sometimes the prosaic quiet acceptance of her own good fortune, which Kate evinced, goaded Miss Gower into feeling that there was a good deal that was faulty and inadequate in the arrangement.

However that may be, Dr. Dacre was supremely happy in his lot, and hopefully in love with his wife, though his sisters persisted in thinking that he had wickedly and wilfully neglected the opportunity of winning the young lady of Blindon, in

order to gratify what they always stigmatised as a young man's fancy.

Perhaps it was just as well for the continuance of Dr. Dacre's peace of mind that neither he nor his wife ever knew that shortly after their quiet marriage a gentleman presented himself at Blindon, sending in a card bearing the name of "Mr. Charles Lewis," and enquiring for Miss Tierney.

Mr. and Mrs. Gower were out, but Nina saw him.

"Before you ask a single question I will tell you that Miss Tierney is married," she began, for she thought he had come on behalf of his wife's family to order Kate home.

His dismay was so unmistakable, his utterances of disappointment and wounded love so open, that they soon came to an understanding.

He had never been on the brink of marriage with Hester Tierney. They had tried to inveigle him and he had escaped the net. They had maligned poor Kate to him cruelly; they had concealed their knowledge of her place of refuge from him. It was only now, just now before his coming to Blindon, that he had gained a glimmering of the truth from one of Hester's young brothers. And now he had come too late! Come to find her married and false, while he had been so true!

Nina was sorry for him, but more for the sake of Dr. Dacre than for that of Dr. Dacre's young wife. She would not show her sorrow or sympathy. She would not even give him the poor morbid pleasure of letting him know that Kate had ever talked of him and longed for him. On the contrary, she painted such a vivid picture of Kate's happiness and contentment, that she sent him back to Warwickshire feeling himself a bitterly aggrieved man.

It is a sharp trouble to Mrs. Gower that her daughter has not made a brilliant marriage yet. The seasons are rolling over her head, and though she is beautiful still, she is no longer graced with that beauty of youth which can afford to wait. Dr. Dacre and his wife speak sometimes of the persistent way in which Nina clings to an unmarried life, and with manly penetration and discernment he says:

"No one can like or admire Nina Gower more than I do; but she was spoilt in her first season. She will always look too high."

Honest fellow! he does not dream of what his wife feels sure of—that Nina has never looked above him.

PENELOPE.

By MARY SEYMOUR.

PART I.

THERE is, or was—for in these days of change it is dangerous to make oneself responsible for the stability of anything—a row of tall houses somewhat south of the Kensington Road. The ground-floor was built for shops, and seemed to fulfil its destiny, but the inhabitants for the second, third, and fourth floors were slow to arrive, although the top storey, consisting of two rooms, afforded an entrancing view of roof and chimney-pot to the north, and of the distant Surrey hills to the south.

Intending tenants seldom revelled in the delights offered to them. Flight after flight of uncarpeted wooden staircase frightened them away from the Elysium they might attain, and few indeed were those active and hopeful enough to reach the top. The interest and pleasure of the row may therefore be imagined when the two rooms on the fourth storey at Number Three were really taken and occupied.

The excitement reached its climax when the tenants were seen to be ladies, and guessed to be artists. Mr. Bradley, the spruce stationer on the ground-floor, was most pressing in his offers of assistance, and Edward, the office-boy, invented messages of the most openly impossible character in order to obtain some sight of the glories of upstairs.

He would arrive opportunely with half a torn newspaper or a dusty unaddressed envelope, "which perhaps belonged to the ladies," just as some specially tempting package was carried upstairs, and he considered himself a privileged mortal if allowed to assist at the unpacking of some of the pictures and busts, which found in him an admiring, if not highly-critical, observer. He advised as to the arrangement of peacock's feathers over the velvet-hung mantelpiece, and toiled up and down willingly with coals or other uninteresting objects, making himself generally useful and civil without, be it said, much hope of receiving many shillings in return, for shillings were scarce with the two girls who were making their first start in life. But if shillings were scarce smiles were plentiful, and it is seldom that any room is furnished or arranged amid such peals of happy laughter as echoed through those two carpetless apartments.

It was when the two rooms were ready, one for work and the other for play, that the occasion was celebrated by a big afternoon tea-party, at which a large and non-descript party assembled—many students from the neighbouring school of art, a few stately ladies who represented either personally or vicariously possible pupils, and a small sprinkling of men; most of them kindly, eager, and critical, and one or two utterly, completely, and entirely bored.

Mr. Thomas Brown was in the latter category. His sister had brought him, and was now drinking tea with the others in the pretty back-room where there was no space for him, and he stood in the work-room, looking in a melancholy way at a picture on an easel, and trying to conceal his devouring anxiety to escape from the atmosphere of art-criticism.

"Now what do you think of that arm?" said a voice at his side; somehow there was an anxiety in the tone which surprised him; had any human being ever asked his opinion upon a point of art before? "Is the attitude constrained or no?"

He looked at the picture, at the straight white-robed figure upon the canvas, at the calm impassive face, at the drooping arms which held a bunch of faded daffodils, at the cold, uncertain background, and then turned to the speaker:

"I am afraid," he said honestly, "I know nothing of drawing, and I don't understand this—"

"It is only a study, of course. I should not dare to give it a name to all of them, but," with a quick glance which seemed at once to recognise him as in no way a dangerous critic, "in my own mind I mean it to be Prosperpine. I dare say you guessed it from the faded daffodils. 'She gathers all things mortal with cold immortal hands.' Those lines were running in my head all the time I was painting. But I am afraid that arm is a little too stiff."

She looked at the figure with regretful eyes, and Mr. Brown took advantage of her preoccupation to transfer his attention from the canvas to herself. He liked her decidedly better than her picture; she was a tall girl with rough, curly brown hair, and a pair of rosy cheeks which paint would have found it difficult to reproduce on canvas or human skin. She was nice to look at and different from other girls, Tom thought, although there were hundreds of young women in London curiously like her, even to her grey-green

frock; her strings of amber beads, and the bunch of daffodils at her throat.

"Do you know," she said, turning round and looking up at him with a smile suppressed on her lips, but gleaming in her eyes, "I suspect you have been horribly bored this afternoon? You don't care for pictures, and no one has talked of anything else. I am so sorry, but what can I do to amuse you? If you will only tell me what you do like, I will try to be sympathetic."

No man likes to find himself set on one side by a young and pretty woman, as unable to share in that which interests and delights her, unless indeed he can openly confess his ignorance as a proof of smiling superiority. Tom was too conscious of his own demerits to do this, so he humbly said that all he asked for was instruction in art, and perhaps she would kindly show him some more pictures and complete his education.

The young lady was a person of tact, and in the works she showed him dwelt but little either on idea or execution, amusing him rather by pointing out the various appearances of a table-cloth, the original of which hung upon the wall, as the tapestried hangings of a lady's bower, the carpet of a presence-chamber, and the covering of a dying knight. Encouraged by finding that art has its ludicrous side, he launched into friendly criticism, and ruined himself in the eyes of his companion, by going into ecstasies over the "real appearance" of a flower-pot in the sketch she showed him of some quaint old houses in Chester.

"It looks so real! Just exactly the red you so often see," he went on, unconscious of his companion's growing sense of the gulf between them. "I can't think how you manage it."

The artist hurriedly removed the work and substituted something else; a red sky all aglow with colour, and a foreground of dark houses with two or three tall ladders against the crimson.

"Oh, I like that," cried the young man, ingenuously speaking from his heart; "it reminds me of Venice."

"It is the memory of a sunset in the City Road," said she demurely.

"The City Road!" and his tones fell from appreciative criticism to deprecative contempt at once.

"I teach drawing in a City school, and walking westward down the City Road from my work, I see some lovely skies. I only wish I could remember them better,

for, after all, one can only paint what one sees. I am glad you like it."

For being a sensible young woman, this eager artist cared something for what the outside world liked as well as for what the artistic circle discussed and admired.

"It reminded me of Venice," he made reply, gratified at her tone.

"Ah! you have been to Venice. Now," with a perfect simplicity which showed that she was unconscious of the strangeness of the question, "how much did your journey cost you?"

Tom Brown hesitated. He had spent a fortnight in Paris, on his way to Italy, and had stayed at one or two other places en route; it was not easy to say at once within fifty pounds what he had spent.

The girl, seeing his hesitation, misinterpreted it. To be poor without shame, to discuss ways and means openly, to try and save pounds and shillings was the custom of those amongst whom she lived; but she knew there were some of the outside world to whom such confessions brought shame and discomfort, and she spared her companion the possible ignominy with a woman's tact.

"Oh, well! I am afraid your expenses would be no guide to us. Men spend in some ways so much more and in others so much less than women, that one gets little help from hearing the cost of their travels. I cannot have enough money to do it for another two years, for we could not do it under twenty pounds apiece."

"Twenty pounds!" he stammered.

"You think that extravagant?" gravely.

"Well, we might manage with eighteen; but then we must never have any food in the middle of the day, and that makes one so tired before evening."

Tom did not protest, for a minute he thought she might be laughing at him; but, when he looked at her, he saw that she was lost in thought, and that her grey eyes had a clouded look of disappointment. He wondered for the first time in his comfortable, rich, sleek life if there really were women who talked like ladies, who looked like ladies, who were ladies, and who yet seemed to think it was a possible thing to go hungry for many days in order to see a rather dull foreign town.

"After all," said the cheerful voice, which was pleasant to his ear as a familiar sound, "it is foolish to complain. 'Here, or nowhere, is our America.'"

He had time to think over this last enigmatical sentence and to admire the

curly rings of short brown hair which lay upon her white forehead and almost hid it from view, for she did not speak again, the utterance of her wish had brought back in a resistless tide her yearning for the land she hardly hoped to see.

The two oddly-assorted people whom chance had brought together for the nonce stood silent side by side, as widely separated in hopes and sympathies as if they had been born in different hemispheres. But there are touches which make the whole world feel its kinship. And at this moment the door of the other room opened, and a mysterious voice cried :

"Pen, milk!"

The young lady started. The young man looked guiltily at the picture in front of him.

"Oh, we have run short of milk; we always do," she said, smiling. "I must go out and get some. I wonder if you would mind—my partner, Miss Burton, is so busy—I wonder if you would mind letting me in."

"Letting you in? I should be delighted, but——"

"You see we are four storeys up, and it takes a good while to go up and down. Will you come down now with me and wait by the hall-door until I return?"

She was putting on her gloves and buttoning them carefully as she spoke; then, snatching up a hat in one hand and a milk-jug in the other, she was out of the room before her companion fully realised the fact that this young lady was going out unabashed to fetch the milk.

He followed her, without attempting to frame any theory of life which should fit in with her extraordinary conduct. The staircase was very dark, and he stumbled somewhat as he went down, on which the young lady apologised.

"I ought to have brought a light, for I shall have to leave you without one whilst I am gone. I hope you don't mind the dark?"

"I am very nervous, and I am afraid I shall scream directly your protecting presence is withdrawn," he made answer, attempting a joke now that he was relieved from the oppressive effects of art.

"You will have plenty of practice, then," said Penelope, "for you may scream for hours, and no one upstairs will hear you."

"Perhaps, then, I may leave you to face these dangers, and fetch the milk for you?"

They were by the hall-door now, and his hand was on the handle, a single ray from the gas-lamp outside falling on her smiling face.

"You don't know the shop, and you would spill the milk, to a certainty," she replied. "Besides, I am used to fetching milk, and probably you are not. You see, there is no bell. I shall rattle the letter-box when I come back."

So saying, she went out into the street, and left the young man to think out the situation at his leisure.

The milk tasted none the worse for the way in which it had been brought in, and Penelope poured him out a cup of tea with pretty, apologetic hospitality when she found he had been neglected, and he drank it in the show-room where the peacock's feathers adorned the mantelshelf. Whilst he sipped it slowly he recognised with that delight at perceiving a familiar object which is the rudimentary stage of art criticism, one or two of the water-colours on the wall.

"You know Cambridge, I see?"

"Yes; do you?"

"I was at Caius some years ago. Have you been there often?"

"I used to go rather often when my sister was at Girton."

"Girton? Oh!"

The sudden blank expression of face, the sudden fall of the voice, were familiar experiences to Penelope when she spoke of her sister, but she had her own amusement out of the situation, a private source of never-failing amusement in comparing her sister as she was with the speaker's probable idea of her.

"Laura," she said to her partner, as soon as the guests were gone, "who was the man you called Mr. Brown?"

"There were two Browns," said prudent Laura, raking the coals out of the fire, "one a rich man, brother of Mrs. Burlington, and the other——"

"My one isn't rich."

"The other writes for the papers."

"I wish I wrote for the papers then. He makes it pay, he's been to Venice. I wonder if The Times will send me if I remit them an account of my travels, illustrated."

"Been done too often," was the laconic answer.

"I always knew I was born fifty years too late. Everything has been done already!"

"Not everything, for the tea-things want washing up. Don't be lazy, Penelope; I am sure it is time to be going home."

PART II.

IF Tom had some difficulty in reconciling his companion's social position, general appearance, and evident culture with the terrible actions of which she was guilty, Penelope experienced no shock of incongruity in comparing his supposed occupation with his mental powers. With feminine rapidity Penelope decided that Mr. Brown wrote short articles on society for certain journals, more remarkable for flippancy of tone than elevation of sentiment or depth of erudition. She was soon confirmed in this belief, for the next time that she met him was when she was copying one of Moroni's portraits in the National Gallery. He appeared to have no particular business there, and stood chatting to her for half an hour, whilst she painted, paying little attention to the pictures, but discussing the people round with good-humoured interest. She supposed he was collecting materials for a series of articles on London picture-galleries. On one point she was convinced—he was not looking at pictures from an artist's point of view, and therefore she took some trouble to give him a little superficial information on the subject, with the hope of thus bringing his readers to a knowledge of higher things—she even told her sister that she was educating the British public by means of a stray journalist.

"Where on earth do you see him?" asked Marian, looking up from the papers she was correcting.

"At the National Gallery," Penelope replied, swinging to and fro the tassel of the blind. It was a lovely evening towards the end of May, and she was enjoying a lazy half-hour after tea. "He is writing articles for some paper—a series of social notes—and he is just now at the Trafalgar Square stage."

Marian accepted the account of the young man's appearance upon the stage of her sister's life in the same spirit of simple faith in which Penelope offered it. To both of them, and to most of their friends, the idea that any ulterior motive must exist would never have presented itself, and if suggested by others, would have been rejected as absurd.

Tom listened patiently to the lectures on art, quite unconscious that Penelope was addressing through him the average newspaper reader, and thus educating the masses. As he never volunteered any remark as to his profession or means of livelihood, it was obviously un-

necessary for her to make any suggestion concerning the one or the other; but having framed her theory, she found no difficulty in fitting in with it alike his actions and his words. It would be difficult to overrate the peculiar charm which Penelope's quick, active spirit exerted over the slower, calmer mind thus brought into frequent contact with hers; but it was not her intellectual superiority which attracted him, but rather her attitude towards life. He had never before, among all the comfortable rich people who were his daily associates, met with anything like the keen appreciation of the simplest pleasure, the intense enjoyment of the most ordinary beauties which he found in this girl, whom a sunset sky, a waltz played by a German band, or a few lines of poetry, seemed to move to sudden, unaffected happiness. If she worked hard, the light of an intense earnestness made the hours of toil bright with hope, and filled the playtime with the sunshine of a gladness too real to be for an instant conscious or obtrusive.

"I wonder if there is anything you don't like, Miss Thursby," he said one hot day in June, when she had laid aside her work for a few minutes.

"Thousands of things," she answered quickly; "but why think of them? Three years ago, when my sister and I first began to consider life seriously, we decided that the best way of being useful was to work just as hard as we could, and to be as happy between whiles as life would allow us, and besides," she stopped suddenly, "I am going to a dance on the 28th, and I do love dancing."

"I did not know you cared for it."

"It is a fancy dress ball; I have never seen one, and I am so glad Mrs. Burlington asked us."

"Mrs. Burlington—oh, I shall be there."

"I am glad," her eyes danced with delight. "Shall you be in fancy dress? What do you mean to be?"

"I think I shall go as a fool," said Tom grimly. His sister was not yet forgiven for insisting upon his presence. "I shall probably then be the only man there who can look the part he has undertaken."

Penelope remembered this speech when, a fortnight later, she saw the uneasy aspect of the unlucky men who, decked in strange array, asked her to dance, or solemnly paraded past her, some with complete consciousness and open defiance of public opinion as to their absurdity, some with unconcealed shamefacedness, and some with

jaunty self-confidence. The women, who were in the majority, enjoyed the situation amazingly, and contrived, apparently at least, to lose the sense of their own absurd and incongruous costumes in the contemplation of their neighbours. Tom's eyes scanned the motley crowd eagerly for the tall figure which he expected to see in classic drapery and stately repose, and it was a consequent shock to him to discover Penelope, dressed in a short silk skirt and flowered chintz, and waltzing with a very un-nautical-looking sailor. He had plenty of opportunity for watching her face, across which a dozen smiles were flitting, some of them lingering and deepening into laughter, as her companion talked energetically and waltzed languidly. Tom felt an unwarrantable degree of anger at the good understanding between the two, and almost came to the conclusion that a keen enjoyment of life, when displayed in the society of other people, may have its drawbacks.

When the waltz was over, and Penelope had smiled at him, he made his way across the room to her, and asked her for a dance, in a way which made the sailor feel, as it was probably intended to do, that his presence was unnecessary, and caused him rapidly to disappear.

"Do you call that a fancy dress?" said Penelope, pointing to a row or two of gold braid on Tom's dress-clothes. "It is a mere sham; all the same I am glad," with a remembrance as to his sensitiveness about money, "that you are not dressed up like some of the others."

There was an unconscious acknowledgment of responsibility for his doings in this speech, which went to Tom's heart and gratified it; but Penelope was only actuated by a desire to cover what she felt to be a false move.

"May I ask what you are?"

She looked at him with affected surprise.

"Don't you see I am Mary, Mary, quite contrary? You ought to have recognised my silver bells and cockle-shells," as she pointed to the ornaments of her costume, nor was the pretty maid wanting to complete the rhyme, as the smiles brought out the dimples in her rosy cheeks, and her eyes danced to the music.

"I am afraid I was very stupid, but I expected to see you in classical dress."

"To draw the attention of the world to my un-Greek profile," turning her face so that he saw the outline of an unclassical,

but most charming nose. "The power of recognising and submitting to the inevitable is the mark of the true artist. How well you dance," she said, after they had joined the crowd, and paused for want of space. "It is nice, isn't it?"

Tom agreed cordially, but dances were hardly the sources of keen enjoyment to him that they were to his partner.

"I wonder if you ever did anything very wicked," she went on after a pause, "and if you found it successful. There are some roses in the refreshment-room that I am dying to steal; but if I take them I am afraid they will be dead before to-morrow."

"Why are those special roses so charming?"

"Just the colour for my picture. I am painting in the cloisters at Westminster, and I must have some bits of colour on the grey stone, and these are too perfect."

Tom's interest in the roses faded as he heard of the Westminster cloisters. If she was painting there it was obviously impossible that she should also be in the National Gallery, whence he had missed her during the last fortnight.

"Marian," said Penelope, as they drove home in a hansom in the early dawn of June, "my converted journalist was there, and thought you the prettiest girl in the room. It was such a joke to see his face when I told him you were my Girton sister. I flatter myself that if I have done nothing else in life, I have shaken that young man's rampant Philistinism."

PART III.

THE cool and shady cloisters were not empty of life and human interest when Tom turned into them from the glare and bustle of Westminster. A few artists were sketching more or less industriously, and a small crowd of admirers were watching more or less critically. He had no trouble in distinguishing his own special artist in her big black hat, with her bright eyes as full of life and vivacity as they had been the night before. Something darkened them for an instant as Tom drew near; it was only the shadow of a shade, and the old look came back as she shook hands with him, and deepened into a warmer sense of happiness as he held out to her a bunch of roses of the very crimson that she had admired the previous night.

"Roses! For me? Oh, thank you! How good of you to think of me. Did you get them from the country to-day?" For roses are plentiful in June even for

Londoners, and Penelope had buried her face in more than one friendly bunch before to-day. Tom was spared, however, the necessity of explanation or prevarication, for her quick eye had caught sight of the wires and the way in which the flowers were fastened.

"These flowers came from Covent Garden; did you," her voice faltered a little—the offence was enormous—"did you buy them?"

Tom tried to say he stole them, but Penelope did not attend to his joke, which no observer would have suspected to be anything but a solemn appeal for mercy, had his voice and manner alone been considered. She went on painting with a certain dogged resolution which revealed a new phase in her character. After a pause she asked, without lifting her eyes from her painting, and with a touch of embarrassment which surprised herself quite as much as it did her companion:

"Mr. Brown, do you come here with a purpose?"

Tom felt and looked guilty. He was a little astonished at the question, but he had long ceased to wonder at any of Penelope's actions, and he had reached a stage at which criticism was impossible. Otherwise her words might have startled him.

"Because if you really find it helps you to think," she went on, quite recovering her usual composure as she discovered that the young man was unable to resent her interference in his private affairs, "you cannot call it a waste of time. My sister says when she has anything which worries her she can often think it out by sitting quietly here and listening to the service in the Abbey." Tom humbly thought he could do the same, and seated himself in one of the arches to think out the subject which interested him.

"You know," said Penelope, dropping back into her old confidential tones as she was reassured that Tom was really at work upon his interesting series of articles, "I don't approve of waste of time or money," with a severe look at the roses beside her. "You bought them, and you ought not to throw away your money like that."

"Indeed, roses are very cheap in June," urged Tom, who had never considered whether the month was June or December.

"In any case you must not, please, buy things for me," Penelope concluded with a grave air of dignity, which completed Tom's discomfiture.

He might have got up and gone away, but there was no place in London so exactly suited for a hot June day as these quiet cloisters, cool and shady, with the green square of grass in the centre, and the quaint old houses beyond, creamy against a blue sky. The busy world outside was forgotten. The children, or foreigners who wandered by, guide-book in hand, lowered their voices and slackened their steps under the silent arches. It seemed to Tom, whose imagination was not, however, of a high order, that he and the girl in the grey linen frock were the only two really living creatures in a world of shadows, who came and went in a purposeless fashion, and were forgotten as soon as they disappeared.

"It is nearly finished," said Penelope, as she scattered the roses on the pavement. "I hope you are getting on well and that I do not disturb you by talking. I wish for your sake some Americans would come here and criticise me loudly, but the place is empty to-day."

"There seems to be no one here but ourselves."

"Wait a minute—twelve is striking. Look!" She pointed as she spoke to the long, dark, arched passage which led into a sunny paved court beyond.

The whole place seemed, as Tom said, deserted, but at the last stroke of twelve a sudden rush of life and energy broke like a stream of sunshine into its quiet and silence. It was only the boys coming out of school, the dignity and deliberation of the seniors being concealed by the enthusiastic rush of the rosy-cheeked juniors—white-collared little boys, who were dispersed in all directions before Tom had time to realise the meaning of the scene.

Penelope had friends amongst the younger ones, as she had nearly everywhere amongst all classes and all ages, railway porters and policemen, public-school boys and overworked nurse-girls. Nobody could resist the charm of her face and manner who was not wrapped in a triple mail of conventionality and self-esteem, and even such were moved by the unconscious grace of her smile.

As it struck one o'clock she laid down her brush and turned to Tom, to whom she had not spoken for at least ten minutes.

"Are you hungry?" she asked. "I am, desperately. I think I can have some lunch to-day; wait until I look."

She drew out her purse and turned slowly over its contents.

"I have just fourpence to spare; will you go and buy some biscuits?"

Tom professed his readiness to go anywhere, and listened to the details as to the place, nature, and amount of the purchase with proper respect. He had never imagined that any human being could pay so much heed to the best method of expending fourpence, and extract so much pleasure from the process.

"There is more than four pennyworth in the bag," she declared when he returned to her side; but she was satisfied with his humble acknowledgment that he had spent an equal sum on his own account. They ate their biscuits in the little cloisters secluded from passing strangers, and studied the plants in the centre garden with scientific curiosity whenever an approaching footstep warned them of a possible intruder.

"Biscuits do crumble so," said Penelope plaintively, "they betray one to the public, but they are delicious food."

Tom thought them a little unsatisfying, but would not have acknowledged it for the world. It was part of this dreamland into which he had found his way that the very food should be wanting in substantiality.

"I am going now," Penelope said when four o'clock had struck, "and I am going to take home all my belongings, for the picture is really finished, really and truly, though I might stay here for another fortnight worrying myself about details. As you are here, perhaps you will help me to carry my easel to the station."

She spoke as if an easel six feet high were a trifle which most men carried in their daily walks, and certainly never suspected that she was making a heavy claim upon her companion's courtesy.

"Marian does not like newspaper parcels," she went on, happily unconscious of Tom's feelings, as she rolled up her paint-brushes in her Daily News. "But I think it is mere nonsense to care whether your brushes are done up in brown-paper or no."

Thus Tom started from the Abbey carrying an easel, accompanied by a girl bearing a big canvas, a newspaper parcel, and her wet palette. He felt the absurdity of the situation, but was tickled still more by discovering how very little the world saw of this absurdity. Nobody seemed in the least surprised at meeting him thus laden, and the couple made their way to the

St. James's Park Station without exciting any comment from the passers-by.

He once suggested a hansom, but Penelope was so obviously convinced that her possession of a return-ticket was a complete barrier to the perpetration of any such extravagance, that he did not venture to repeat his suggestion.

"I did rather hope—" Penelope spoke in a more depressed voice than was usual to her; "I did rather hope that some American would come to-day, and take a fancy to my picture. I think an American ought to want a picture of Westminster."

"I know of plenty of English people who would like to have it," Tom answered as he nearly tumbled over the legs of the easel. "It is a long way prettier than any of the pictures I have."

Penelope concluded he had a collection of chromo-lithographs, and sighed to think that as yet his education in art had not reached the most elementary stage of classification.

"There are a couple of Wilson's my father was very proud of, and they are not to be compared with your picture."

The young man was in love, and must be forgiven for the audacity of his statement, but it was not the comparison which startled Penelope.

"A couple of Wilson's! Oh, where are they?"

"I have not got them in town, they are down at my place in the country."

"At your place in the country," Penelope said mechanically. Then she stopped and looked at him with a strange expression on her face. "Mr. Brown, don't you write for the papers?"

"I am afraid not," said Tom, laughing at her look of absolute blank amazement.

"Are you Mrs. Burlington's brother?"

"Did you not know I was?"

"No, certainly not," said Penelope curtly, resuming her walk.

She did not speak again; a sudden dark curtain seemed to have fallen between her and her companion; she was only conscious of a pain which drove her into indignation and yet made her cautious of speech. Unluckily, Tom took the one step a woman cannot forgive: he attempted a joke when she was feeling acutely.

"Are you angry with me because I don't write for a newspaper? It is the editor's fault, not mine, I assure you."

Penelope turned her eyes upon him with sudden, and to his mind, unprovoked passion.

"I don't care what you write for, but I do think you should not have deceived me in this matter. I hate rich people, they are all selfish and self-absorbed, and I wish I had never seen you."

They were at the station by now, and she held out her hand for her easel, but Tom answered her very gently:

"I do not like to hear you say that; but you must let me see you into the train anyhow."

The situation was comic, the surroundings commonplace, but human feelings decline to adjust themselves to external circumstances, and there were the elements of real misery in Tom's heart as he managed to dispose of his charge and her unmanageable belongings in the railway-carriage, and received her cold bow and "thank you" in reply.

Penelope was singularly silent all the evening, restless over her needlework and unable to read.

At last she said abruptly:

"Marian, have you ever thought about rich people?"

Marian lifted up her beautiful face from the book she was studying, and waited for some explanation. Her position as teacher to a class of thirty-five girls, had made her cautious about answering remarks of very wide application.

"I mean do you hate them—all?"

"Hate them! No, Pen dear, why do you ask? I hope we shall never be rich. I think much money makes people blind to the real meaning of life, but there are people who never could discover it under any circumstances, and it is just as well that they should be wealthy, comfortable, and commonplace."

Seldom had Marian's eloquence produced so much effect. She was surprised herself at the result, as Penelope threw down her work and burst into a sudden passion of tears.

Tears were not common in their home. A laughing disregard of the inconveniences of poverty; a brave endurance of unsuccess; a half-comic, half-serious despair over disappointment; and a genuine enjoyment of all innocent pleasures—these were amongst the moods of both sisters; but tears, sobs, and low spirits were rare.

"Don't, darling, you're too tired. I tell you what, we will have a holiday on Saturday; I saved seven shillings on my hat yesterday, and we will have a day on the river, and get a good rest."

"Let us take Lizzie Morris then," said Penelope, drying her eyes in a shamefaced way. "She has so few pleasures that we ought to do something for her."

PART IV.

THE boating party-came off, but Lizzie Morris did not share the pleasure as Penelope had hoped. A chance word from Penelope at her drawing-class next day made Mrs. Burlington acquainted with the plan, and nothing would satisfy that kindly lady but that the sisters should join a river-party, at which she was expecting a large number of friends. Penelope accepted, with some misgivings as to Marian's approval, which were needless, for, when the sisters met, it was Marian who first apologised that she could not keep her engagement; she had promised to look over some examination-papers for a fellow-teacher, and these must be done on Saturday. Her only regret was that Penelope must lose her holiday; she was proportionately rejoiced at the arrangement suggested by her sister. Thus it came to pass that Penelope formed one of a large and merry party which started under a blazing sun from Richmond Bridge.

At first the heat was oppressive, but by degrees the sun sank lower, and Penelope found pleasure in everything; in the boats that passed and repassed; in the swans sailing by; in the coolness of the water in which she dipped her hand; in the delicious strawberries and cream which she and her companions ate as they sat upon the river's bank, and waited for the kettle to boil. If she was not quite contented, she shut her eyes wilfully to the truth, and almost persuaded herself that she was perfectly happy.

"My dear Miss Thursby, I am afraid you have made no sketches. Can you see Kingston Bridge? It would look delightful now, I know."

Penelope took its charms upon faith, for there was no possibility of using sight in the matter.

"Oh, you must make a little sketch. Tom, do take Miss Thursby out in your little boat for ten minutes, to sketch the bridge; you will have time before the kettle boils. Miss Thursby, I think you know my brother—Mr. Brown."

The two bowed silently, as fate, represented by Mrs. Burlington, brought them together in close and unexpected proximity. Neither seemed inclined to speak until they were well in sight of the bridge, and

then Tom only asked her if he should keep the boat steady. The boat was steadier than Penelope's hand, which shook a little as she put together a few hurried lines. She was, naturally, uncomfortable as she remembered the way in which she had last met him.

"I think that will do, thank you," she said after a few minutes; "I am sorry to have given you the trouble."

She looked at him as she spoke, as if in defiance of her own feelings; the sun was in her eyes, or something else dazzled and confused her, and at that moment a bustling little steam-launch came puffing round the corner. Penelope pulled first one tiller-rope and then the other.

"Oh, what am I to do?" she cried, completely losing her head; "I don't know which to pull."

"Don't pull either," said Tom very steadily; "drop them both at once."

Penelope obeyed instinctively, for Tom spoke in a tone which enforced obedience, and gave her confidence, as he pulled a stroke which brought the bows of their little craft out of danger, just as the steam-launch sent forth a whistle more ferocious than the objurgations of its steersman.

"That was my fault," Penelope owned penitently.

Tom did not answer; they were drawing near the rest of their party, and his chance was slipping away.

"Miss Thursby," he began with severity, which would have appeared absurd to a third person, but which by no means bore that character to his solitary listener, "what do you think of a man who despises another because he is poor?"

Penelope muttered a few words, which Tom did not appear to hear.

"I think you would call him a snob, would you not? Well then, I don't see that it is any fairer to despise a man because he has too much money than because he has too little."

It was not a long or eloquent sermon, but it produced a result which more elaborate and more lengthy disquisitions have often failed to effect—it convinced its hearer. Penelope, during the whole of the quiet, cool row home, was thinking over the astonishing fact that this young Philistine, whose education she had been attempting, had rebuked her for her narrow-mindedness, and had rebuked her justly.

The party broke up at Richmond, and it was natural enough that Mr. Brown should

promise to see Penelope home, as the girl was the only one to travel by the Metropolitan line of railway; but she would have given much to escape from the escort which was a matter of course to the rest of the party.

Tom took her ticket and his own, and then when they were seated in a first-class compartment, was annoyed at his own thoughtlessness, for the shabby little purse which Penelope drew out was emptier than when he had last seen it. She insisted upon his receiving the money without listening to a word of excuse, and then sat looking silently out of window, watching the lamps as they flashed past. Suddenly she turned to him, and with a return to her old, simple manner, spoke:

"Mr. Brown, you were quite right, and I was quite wrong in what I said. I beg your pardon. I am sure it ought not to make the least difference whether one is rich or no, but one cannot outgrow one's prejudices." She smiled as she spoke, her bright eyes looked at him with friendliness and forgiveness.

"I wish my money was at the bottom of the sea," he answered, "if it is to separate me from you; for I love you better than anything in the world, Penelope. I think you know that."

She looked at him with unabashed eyes of sweet surprise, which were sufficient to stem the words upon his lips; but it was impossible to stop there, and he spoke a few hurried words, which were, however, clear enough to her ears.

"Oh no—no," she said at last; "it could never be—we are so different, and have such different lives. You don't care for the things I care for."

"I care for you," urged Tom, unwilling to profess, even then, any deep devotion to art.

"Please say no more about it," Penelope answered decidedly. "It would never do, I know."

It was not a courteous or considerate reply, but it is difficult to suppose that any answer could take the sting from "No!" Tom, at all events, accepted it as final, and did not attempt to reopen the question. Penelope's unabashed self-possession was destructive of hope, and if he bore himself with an outward calm to match her own, he suffered none the less keenly.

"Indeed, it would never do," she began again, when they had left the train and were

walking to her home through the narrow streets. "You will be glad some day that I was wiser than you, and saw how little we were suited to one another."

Tom urged no answer; he had always had a very honest conviction that Penelope was too good for him, and he felt equally clear now that the one thing which might have made them equals could never bring them together. If she had loved him, she could never have spoken as she did.

They paused on the doorstep of her lodgings.

"I will wish you good-bye here then; I do not suppose I shall see you again, but I should like you to know that, though you could not love me, you have made me very happy, dear."

Penelope did not answer; for the first time she realised that Tom must be all or nothing to her; that she must be ready to put her hand in his and face the world with him, or never touch his hand or see his face again. The choice had been her own, only she had not understood how much she was setting aside. He waited some time for her to speak, in vain; then lifting her hand in his, he touched it very gently with his lips, and left her, without another word.

He had not gone ten paces, when he heard her steps behind him.

"No! don't go—don't go without saying good-bye." He turned; tears were running down her cheeks, and her voice was indistinct with emotion. "I don't mean anything more than just to say good-bye;" but then, in spite of training and tradition, Tom kissed his sweetheart under the gas-lamp, regardless of possible passers-by.

"Going to marry a rich man, who knows nothing of art, and never reads a book! Pen, Pen! my darling Pen!" was Marian's cry. "For such a marriage someone must sacrifice a great deal, and I don't think it will be the man. You will have everything against you—different tastes, different habits, different views of life."

"It is quite true," said Penelope wistfully, twisting her hands in a distressed way quite new to her; "it is quite true; but, Marian, I don't know how it is—it is an absurd thing to say, and I don't like it myself—but," coming nearer and kneeling beside her sister, so that she might murmur in her ear, "I am afraid I really do love him."

She hardly breathed the words above a

whisper, but no argument could have silenced Marian so completely as did that half-broken murmur. What answer could be made?

IN THE GOLDEN PRIME.

By ELLEN MULLEY.

CHAPTER I.

AWAY across the English Channel, where a little island lies, a sweet spring day was softly closing in, at tendersilence brooding over land and sea. The echo of the sunset-gun had died away. Over the darkening waters twilight had fallen. No sound save the faint murmur of the incoming tide, or the late call of thrush or blackbird farther inland, came to break the stillness.

In an old manor-house, grey and ivy-grown, nestling dim in the twilight at a steep hill's foot, with lawn and flower-beds stretching down almost to where the waves came rippling in, a young girl sat at her piano. Her fingers touched with a certain old-fashioned grace the yellow keys, for the instrument, like the house, was old and time-worn.

The girl's voice, at least, was young and fresh enough as it went thrilling through the quiet room, and—for the windows were wide open—into the still soft night beyond. The song, a quaint French ballad, sounded strangely sad, and the clear young voice trembled in the darkness.

Suddenly the song ceased. From the garden came a quick, light step, a hand was laid upon the sill of one of the open windows, the figure of a young man came leaping in; a young manly voice came sounding through the room.

"Jeanne, Jeanne, I say," then the voice changed: "Why, Jeanne, what is it? What has happened?"

But still Jeanne did not answer.

"You are ill?" Still no answer. "Some one has vexed you." At the bare thought the young man's voice grew angry. "Who is it?" he cried; then, suddenly calming himself, gently tried to pull the girl's hands from before her hidden face.

"Oh, Louis," said the girl, as he got her hands in his, "how silly you are!" And then she laughed and tried to make believe there were no tears upon her face.

"Am I? I am glad to hear it is only that," said Louis simply. "I was afraid it was something much worse."

It is quite a young voice that speaks, and, now that it is evident there is nothing very much the matter, it rings gaily enough.

"I was afraid you were unhappy, and that is not like you, Jeanne, you know; and somehow, now I am so happy myself," the young fellow chattered on, "it seems as if every one else must be happy too. No one should be miserable if I could help it—you least of all. Why, it would break my heart!"

"Not quite, I think," Jeanne said softly. She had got away her hands, and sat turning a little ring upon one of the fingers round and round.

"Oh, but it would, though," Louis said stoutly, as Jeanne gave a little friendly movement of dissent. "Of course I am happy," he went on; "how could I be otherwise?"

At the sound of triumph in his voice the girl gave a little shiver.

"But I want you to be happy, too. Is it so very wonderful, dear? Why, it seems to me, Jeanne, we have never been apart, you and I. The same scrapes and tears to follow; the same jollifications; the haymaking, the—oh, Jeanne, you are not going to forget it all now!"

"Forget it," his companion repeated below her breath, and with another little shiver.

"You are cold," Louis cried, starting up. "Let me shut the windows; I should have done it before." Presently he came back to her side. "What was I saying? Oh, about the dear old times. You are not going to say that they are over, Jeanne? Why need there be any difference? We shall only be happier still." Jeanne shook her head. "Why on earth not? Oh, Jeanne, you are never going to be jealous?"

At this his companion laughed outright.

"Oh, you conceited boy! don't you see she has nothing to do with it? If she were not here at all—if she had never come!" The girl paused a moment, and then went quickly on: "It would have been all the same. Nothing can go on for ever—not even haymaking, and—and other things," she wound up vaguely. "The old times can never come back," she went on. "Now I am grown up—why do you laugh?—now I am grown up, and you are a man, we could never have gone about together and have done the same things again."

"Why not?" asked Louis sharply; "we are cousins, and——"

Jeanne shook her head. "We are nothing of the sort; we never were."

Louis had never heard Jeanne's voice like that before. What was it that was changing her like this? He got up and walked angrily away.

"Oh, of course, if we are not cousins now, we weren't before; I suppose I know that much," he said. "But I didn't think you were going to turn round on a fellow like this, Jeanne. Why, only a week ago you were ready for anything."

"A week ago!" Jeanne echoed; "I feel as if it was years."

CHAPTER II.

BEAUTIFUL in the early dawn of a May morning the little island lay, basking in the bright spring sunshine. The tender flush of but lately opened leaves clothed hill and valley; orchards bloomed in stars of pink and white; odours from a myriad blossoms came borne on every breeze. In hidden dells streamlets sang on their morning way to the blue sparkling sea that washed and circled round it all, while overhead another blue—clear, radiant, sun-steeped—canopied it.

A young girl was standing in the early sunshine on the green-clad summit of the hill, that sheltered the old manor-house of La Tourelle. She had looked on the same scene a thousand times before; near or far there was not a tree-top, not a speck of white gleaming road, that she did not know by heart. Yet as her eyes fell on it now, it seemed to her it had never looked so fair. Hill and valley, the blue glittering bay, the little old-world town of St. Aubin's almost at her feet, the bigger town of St. Heliers flashing back the morning sun at the far-off end of the bay, away there to her left—all lay spread before her, just as she had known them all her life.

"Yes, I suppose it is a good world," she was saying to herself; "and yet, oh, why must things change and alter? The sea, the sky, the hills, they keep the same; it is we who change. I suppose it is only a little place," she went on, "as Tina says, but it's big enough to be happy in—if only we were let alone. But others come, and then—then it is never the same again!"

She said the last few words aloud with a little cry. A girlish laugh sounded at her elbow.

"Oh, Jeanne!" said the new comer,

"what a dear old goose you are! I believe you don't think there is a world outside this little shred of an island of yours. As for people coming to it and waking you all up, you ought to be much obliged to them. I know I should be. And as for things changing, of course they change; only fancy a world where they didn't!"

"But when you get used to a place, and to the people?" said Jeanne, putting out her hand.

"Then I think it is time to change—the place and the people. Oh, you need not look so scandalised. I should never want to change you, you are too delightful; but it is true all the same."

"And Louis?" Jeanne asked with a little laugh.

"Hum! Louis, ah! Well, I don't know."

The girl put her pretty head on one side, and pretended to look doubtful.

"But you care for him, Tina?" and Jeanne looked anxiously in her companion's laughing face.

"Care for him? of course I care for him! I think he is the dearest, handsomest little Frenchman in the world—there!"

Jeanne—quiet Jeanne—stamped her foot angrily.

"He is no more French than you are," she cried hotly. "He is Jersier to the backbone. As for little, he is not a great red-faced Englishman, if that is what you mean."

"When first I saw him," Tina went on provokingly, "I did not think I should like him at all. I could only laugh, he looked so comical with his dark cropped head and that little black moustache of his—no Englishman goes about like that."

"But you care for him now," persisted Jeanne anxiously, "or how will you live here all your life? It is only a little place, as you say, and the people are always the same."

"Yes, it is a little place," Tina said slowly, looking round her, "and the people—but, bah! it is not yet, why trouble oneself?"

"Trouble——" Jeanne was beginning, but Tina turned a deaf ear.

"Oh dear, how hungry I am!" she cried; "if we stay up here much longer I shall eat you!"

She had caught Jeanne's hand in hers, and in another moment the two were running lightly down the hill. At the hill's foot Louis Le Quesne was standing,

his dark head uncovered, his little black moustache freshly trimmed and pointed.

"Here you are at last," he said. "How hungry you both look! Come in, Tina, and have some breakfast."

La Tourelle, the old manor-house, was a very old house indeed. Le Quesnes have owned La Tourelle for I cannot tell you how many hundred years. The Le Quesne who owns it now is old and childless, and it is his nephew Louis who will come after him. The young man and Jeanne (who is old Mrs. Le Quesne's niece) have, indeed, known no other home. Louis was at St. Servan, just across the water, for two or three years, at the college there, it is true, but he was glad enough to get back to the old place, and has never cared to leave it since. But there is time enough to see the great world yet; meanwhile, the young man goes happily enough on his way, through his own little one. There are the lands of La Tourelle, some fifty vergées or so (somewhere about twenty English acres)—for the holding is a large one—to be ploughed and sown, hay and corn to be gathered in, vrac to be cut and carried—twice a year this—and spread over the soil; apples to be gathered and cider made; sleek, soft-eyed cows to be cared for. There is, too, a scarlet coat to be donned more or less often, for of course Louis holds a commission in the local militia, and his name figures as a lieutenant in the English Army List, where his uncle's also may be found, considerably higher up. And then last, though certainly not least, there is Jeanne. There is someone else too—Tina. Six weeks ago the hot-headed young fellow had not so much as heard her name; now he wildly declares to Jeanne—poor Jeanne!—that he does not know how he ever can have lived without her! The land, the cows, the scarlet coat even, have not seen much of Louis the last few weeks. Day after day the three young people have scoured the island together, almost living out of doors in the soft, bright, spring weather.

Tina Daunt is quite a near neighbour. She had come on a visit to a villa close by early in April, and now May is here, and in June she must go away. Go back to England and to London, the only place, she thinks, in all the world where one could live, though Louis is not there. Yet she, too, is very much in love indeed, and is never happy save when with Louis or Jeanne. And Jeanne is with them always, they will have it so, and hears

their happy foolish talk, as they make love under her very eyes.

So, in the golden prime, the happy days went by for the two young lovers. The old people at La Tourelle did not take very kindly to the little chattering English girl. Louis had chosen her, so it must be; but it was something quite different to what they had planned or intended, or, indeed, ever dreamed of as possible. And Jeanne, their own little Jeanne, did she care? they asked one another. They watched and watched as the days went by, but they could not tell.

CHAPTER III.

JEANNE, "la p'tite" as the old people, and even Louis, were fond of calling her, was by no means so very little. Straight and slender as a young poplar, it may be that she looked taller than she really was. The free, graceful figure, the large, generous nature, alike struck one.

"No, there is nothing little about our Jeanne," those at La Tourelle would say to one another, to their neighbours, but they called her "la p'tite" all the same. So it was just because there was nothing little about the young girl that, although loving, anxious old eyes watched her in these bright spring days when so much was happening, they learnt so little. She was a little paler, perhaps, but then the roses were always of the faintest on Jeanne's creamy skin; the girlish laugh did not ring out quite so clearly or so often, it might be; but then these soft sweet spring days were trying, and Jeanne was going about so much; or it might be it was fancy altogether. Louis and Tina saw nothing.

"It is Jeanne's birthday soon," said Louis one day, when Tina's stay was drawing to a close. "She will be eighteen. What shall we do, how shall we keep it?"

"Do?" cried Tina; "let us have a picnic, of course."

"The very thing," said Louis. "Where shall it be? who shall we ask? Come here, Jeanne," he cried gaily; "come and help us."

They were in the old-fashioned drawing-room where the piano stood; Jeanne was softly touching the keys.

"Let us go somewhere by ourselves," she said when she heard what they were talking of. "Somewhere not too far, Louis, where the dear old people can come."

"Don't listen to her, Louis," cried Tina. "She is not to have anything to say in the matter; we are going to arrange every-

thing—Louis and I. It is your birthday-treat, and you are to have nothing to do with it, except enjoy it when it comes."

"Very good," said Jeanne, smiling; "I see my part is to be very easy."

"Now, Louis," cried Tina impatiently, "let us go on."

"Us?" echoed Louis, laughing; "it strikes me it is you, mademoiselle, who are going to arrange everything!"

"Of course I am, and it is you who are going to say 'yes' to everything. Listen! In the first place everybody is to be invited, do you understand?"

"Oh, certainly! I only hope the Governor won't object to meet old Le Mesurier at the farm here; and that her ladyship—she is pleasant enough as a rule, I know—won't quite stare poor Mrs. M. and the Miss Le Mesuriers into interesting specimens of native statuary."

"You are too stupid," pouted Tina. "Speak to him, Jeanne."

"I thought Jeanne was not to open her mouth!" said Louis; "but come, let us be serious; there are only a dozen we shall really care to ask," and Louis told off as many familiar names upon his fingers. But Tina shook her head.

"Not nearly enough, it will be no fun at all."

Louis looked at Jeanne, a little cloud was on his face.

"They are just our own friends, you see, Tina," Jeanne explained, "Louis's and mine. I don't think there are any others we should really care to ask; unless, that is," she added, as Tina's countenance fell, "there is anyone you would like particularly to come."

Tina's face, on which cloud and sunshine were given to chase one another as quickly as on an April day, brightened.

"Of course there is," she said quickly, with a little flush and laugh; "why, you said yourself one of them was very nice, Jeanne."

"I?" cried Jeanne, wondering, perplexed.

"Oh, Jeanne, you know you did! You said the other night Mr. Byng was very nice—for an Englishman."

"Did I?" laughed Jeanne; "well, I believe I did, and is it he you want asked?"

Tina stole a look at Louis, who was walking up and down the room.

"There were two of them, you know," she said simply.

Louis stayed in his walk. "You are never wanting those fellows at the barracks

asked!" he said sharply, looking from Jeanne to Tina. "Why, they are the merest strangers."

His dark eyes were flashing, he was twisting the end of his little black moustache quite viciously. He was not at all a bad-tempered young fellow, but he was feeling stung, more than disappointed, as was perhaps not very wonderful.

Tina was pouting, Jeanne's face reflected Louis's.

Just then the door opened, a white-coiffed, brown, wrinkled face, with dark eyes, appeared.

"What is it, Marie?" asked Jeanne.

"On demande voir M'sieu Louis," said Marie, nodding and smiling at the two girls.

She had a tray in her hand, on which were two little bits of pasteboard. She came up to where Louis was standing; two young men followed her into the room—they were Jeanne's Englishman and his friend, from the barracks.

On a sudden things had changed. Tina's pout had vanished, the sun shone once more. Even Louis, who could scarcely have cared so very much to see the two at that moment, cleared his brow and came briskly towards the new comers.

Jeanne smiled a kindly welcome.

"Find my aunt, and tell her these gentlemen are here," she said to Marie, who understood English well enough, and could speak it too when she chose, which certainly was not often.

"We found Colonel Le Quesne was not in," said the elder and bigger of the two young men, who was in fact Jeanne's Mr. Byng, "but we thought we might come in as we had the pleasure of meeting you and Mrs. Le Quesne the other evening."

"My aunt will be very glad to see you," said Jeanne with her pretty air of gracious self-possession.

Louis, who had too much of the Frenchman in him to be anything but polite, said something gracious too.

Tina, beside whom the other and younger man, whose name was Barry, had found a seat, gave her companion a mischievous look.

"You cannot say anything polite to me, you know," she said; "you did not know that I was here."

"Didn't I?" the young man answered. "What will you say when I tell you that I am one of those wonderful people who always know everything?"

Tina laughed. "How horrid! I am sure I sha'n't like you a bit."

"Oh yes, you will, when you know what a good fellow I am," said Mr. Barry.

He was a fair, good-looking young man; he spoke very slowly, and had a funny, solemn way with him; it was only his eyes that laughed.

"Well, since you are so clever, you can tell me what we were talking about as you came in," Tina said.

"You were talking about me, of course," said the young man readily.

Tina was delighted. "How conceited you all are," she cried; "I think you soldiers are the worst of all. Shall I tell you what we were saying?—no, you would never guess, not if you tried till you were a general."

"I should never guess it then," said George Barry; "generals are stupid old fogies who never guess anything, unless it's something you particularly don't want them to know. However, as I am not a general, nor ever likely to be one, I can guess this much—it was something very nice."

"It was nothing of the sort, unless you call not being asked to a picnic very nice?"

"Eh! no; I certainly should not call that very nice, if you were going to be there."

His companion looked across the big room to where Louis sat by Jeanne; he could not well leave her, for Mrs. Le Quesne had not yet appeared.

"I will tell you all about it," she said confidentially, as her gaze came back. "You see this day week is Jeanne's birthday, she will be eighteen"—young Barry nodded—"and we are to have a picnic."

"To which we are not to be asked; I see. Which of you is it will not have us? But, of course, it is you! I wonder you are not afraid to tell me! Supposing I were to swallow my sword, or do anything else equally desperate as soon as I get back to barracks, what would you do then?"

"Well, we certainly should not put off the picnic," said Tina, laughing.

For the first time, solemn-faced George Barry laughed too.

"No," he said, "I don't believe you would."

At that moment Mrs. Le Quesne entered the room. The young men hastily left their seats and went forward to meet her; the little tête-à-tête in the far-off corner came to an end.

Tina ran over to Jeanne's side. She took

the chair on which Mr. Byng had been sitting.

"I have told him all about it," she whispered hurriedly. "You must ask them now; do you hear, Jeanne?"

Jeanne smiled and nodded. Tina looked across to her late companion. He had seated himself by Mrs. Le Quesne's side, and with an air of having known her all his life, was chatting away to her in just the same funny, slow way, and with the same solemn look upon his face, as when he had talked to Tina. She, too, was evidently finding him amusing.

Mrs. Le Quesne was a little, fine-featured old lady, with keen dark eyes, and quick, bright, un-English ways, for strangely enough it was Louis, not Jeanne, whom she resembled. She was smiling now at something the young fellow was saying.

"What is this Mr. Barry is telling me about a picnic?" she called out to Louis; "why is he not to be asked? He tells me he is very unhappy about it, and does not think he can remain in the island."

Louis burst out laughing in spite of himself; then he had to explain.

"It is some of Barry's nonsense," Mr. Byng was saying to Jeanne, and then he too heard about the picnic.

"Well, I will invite you, Mr. Barry," said Mrs. Le Quesne, when the state of the case was made clear to her.

"And Byng?" said Mr. Barry plaintively; "I never go out without Byng."

"And Mr. Byng, of course, if he will be good enough to come."

Of course Mr. Byng declared himself delighted, and then came a discussion as to the whereabouts of the intended excursion. Spot after spot was suggested, canvassed, thrown aside.

"I tell you what," said George Barry, when at last the two rose to leave, "you think it over between this and, say Sunday, and Byng and I will walk over in the afternoon and hear what you have decided. You will let us come, won't you, Mrs. Le Quesne? You don't know what deadly work it is out at St. Peter's on a Sunday—nothing to do but to roam the happy valley and watch a lot of seedy-looking cabbages growing up into respectable, father-of-a-family walking-sticks."

"At least you could not see that everywhere," said Mrs. Le Quesne; "but since you are so tired of them, you may come over and look at the colonel's cabbages for a change; they, at any rate, are not so ambitious."

CHAPTER IV.

LONG before Sunday—on which day I need scarcely say the two friends once more found their way over to La Tourelle—an eligible spot for the picnic had been fixed upon. In due time came the day itself, Jeanne's birthday, the day on which she was to have nothing to do but to enjoy it.

Quite early in the morning Tina was at the manor-house enquiring for her friend. It was Marie to whom she addressed herself; Marie who did not seem at all pleased to see her just then; who indeed had come to look upon the young girl as an intruder altogether—a cuckoo in the nest of her own birdling. I am afraid she told a sad fib on the occasion.

"Mamzelle Jeanne is not yet risen," she said in her favourite "patois."

Tina knew well enough what the woman was saying; the unfriendly looks were not lost upon her. She laughed in Marie's brown face.

"You dreadful old story-teller," she said; "they are up and in the garden, both of them—your Mamzelle Jeanne and your M'sieu Louis, and I am going to them now."

Tina went dancing across the hall. Marie shook her coif at the gay retreating figure. Her black eyes shone. She went, grumbling to herself, back to her dining-room floor.

Tina found Jeanne and Louis in the garden together as she had said. They had been there for the last half-hour gathering Jeanne's birthday bouquet—it was Louis who did this—laughing, chattering, happy. To Jeanne it was the old times come back again. Even for Louis, I think, just then Tina had no existence.

But she was coming towards them now, gay, unconscious, smiling. The two went across the wet grass to meet her. Jeanne's dream was over. The same sun was shining, the same soft spring air came over the odorous flower-beds, the sound of murmuring waves still went on, but it was the past no longer; only Jeanne's birthday, as I have said; the day on which she was to have nothing to do but enjoy herself.

It was not such a very small party after all that gathered upon the St. Ouen sands. It took all the fingers of Jeanne's, Louis's, and Tina's hands to tell them over.

Marie was there, too, smiling and chattering, as her deft brown fingers busied themselves over baskets and hampers. But Marie's black eyes were not so entirely occupied over their work that she could not see what was taking place around her.

"No, the bon Dieu be praised, one could tell pretty well what was going on in the world, yet not have eyes in the back of one's head. It was but to use the eyes one had—and behold!"

I think on this occasion Marie's bright eyes saw even more than they cared for. Mamzelle Daunt and the young officer with the funny solemn air were evidently going to be inseparable, it is true; that was well enough. On the sands, while Marie unpacked the hampers and arranged the dinner; at the dinner itself, to which everyone brought such appetites; there they were still, side by side, laughing, talking, eating, no one could get a word with either—not even Louis, who at last gave up trying and perched himself on the most uncomfortable-looking piece of rock available, neither eating or speaking, only looking gloomily on. Marie did not pity him one bit.

If only Mamzelle Tina would never look at him again, that would be better still! It was only Jeanne who was sorry, who watched him with anxious wistful eyes, who would have made a place for him by her side. But Mr. Byng was on her other side, and Louis pretended not to see the invitation. Young Byng who could not but see what was going on, would have given a good deal for such kindly looks, but he knew that they were not for him.

After dinner it was just the same. The guests went off in little groups of twos and threes, some in this direction, some in that; and again it was Tina and young Barry, Jeanne and Mr. Byng, who were together. Louis disappeared altogether.

"Mind and don't go too far," the colonel called after the young people; "it is going to rain."

Clouds were already gathering. As the afternoon wore on there was less and less of blue sky to be seen. A cold mist was driving in. Before long sea and sky alike were blotted out. A heavy rain was falling, stragglers came hurrying up to the starting-place; there was shelter to be had close by while carriages were being got ready. Louis was one of the last to reappear, some of the party had already been got off. Mrs. Le Quesne came hurrying up to him fidgety, anxious.

"Where are Jeanne and Tina?" she cried; "have they not been with you?"

"Are they not here!" he cried, looking quickly round him, half frightened, wholly angry.

"They are with Mr. Byng and Mr. Barry," said a young man at his elbow.

"Some one said they had seen them on the rocks out there before this mist came on."

The speaker was a stranger to the island. Louis turned sharply round on him.

"Mon Dieu!" he cried, "do you know what you are saying? Out there in this mist and the tide running in!"

It was coming in, fast and strong. The spray was already driving in their faces. Mrs. Le Quesne was crying; Marie, with chattering teeth, was calling on every one to save "la p'tite"—her Mamzelle Jeanne. It was Jeanne these two were thinking of; I am afraid in their sudden trouble the little English girl was almost forgotten.

"Hush!" said Louis sharply, "I am going!"

But where? Before him the sea and the blinding mist—he could do nothing there; behind him the cliffs, from their summit he might catch a sight of them somewhere. There was nothing else to be done. Tina was certainly not forgotten by him, and yet one day—many days after—it came back to him that it was Jeanne's name that he had kept repeating to himself, as he ran and stumbled up the steep cliff's side. At the top he stood still a moment, waiting to get back his breath; not knowing in truth what was to be done next. The mist was around him here, the rain beat in his face and almost blinded him. He could scarcely tell sea from land. If the missing ones had got out to the rocks, as that stranger fellow had said, no one, nothing could save them. As he recognised all the horror and his helplessness, the young fellow groaned aloud. If there had been but something he could do! Presently he started, then gave a shout to those below. A girlish laugh had caught his ear; a minute more, and two figures, drenched and forlorn-looking, were almost upon him. They were Tina and Mr. Barry. Tina was laughing and talking as though she had never left off. The rain had at any rate not spoilt her pleasure. Louis's heart gave a great thankful throb as he recognised them.

"Where is Jeanne?" he cried; "a nice fright you have given us!"

"Jeanne is safe enough," said Tina mischievously; "Mr. Byng is taking care of her. Come, Mr. Barry," she cried over her shoulder, "I must run on, I am wet through."

George Barry lingered behind a moment.

"Byng and Miss Dumaresque are close behind," he said politely. "We have been

over the old church and manor-house, and waited, hoping it might clear."

Then the young man hastened on. Louis made no attempt to follow; he was not intending to wait for the others either. At Tina's words all his anger had come back.

As he stood halting, irresolute, the two came hurrying up. Yes, he was angry enough, but somehow at the sight of Jeanne, pale, drenched with rain, but safe, his anger melted. As he met her clear, tender gaze his own softened.

"You are wet through, Jeanne," he said anxiously; "if you are not too tired you had better walk home with me, it will be far safer."

"I am not a bit too tired," Jeanne declared.

Louis turned to Byng. He was feeling quite amiable, even to him.

"Will you mind telling my aunt that my cousin is walking home with me," he said. "The distance is nothing; most of the people are from our neighbourhood; if you can get the wettest of them to walk too, do, there's a good fellow."

The good fellow, thus dismissed, could not very well decline the mission, but his honest face clouded not a little. It was with reluctant eyes he bade Jeanne good-bye.

Louis drew her hand in his; all his bad temper was flown, his brightness had come back.

"What a failure it has been!" he said quite cheerfully.

"Oh, I hope not!" said Jeanne. "It is, of course, an unfortunate ending; but for that, I think they have all enjoyed it."

"Have you?" asked Louis quickly, in his voice a jealous throb; "it was your picnic—you were to, you know."

"Was I?" Jeanne said with a little sigh. "Yes, I remember; yes, it has been pleasant enough, but, somehow, I think the old birthdays were the best."

CHAPTER V.

TINA was gone, the little island knew her no more. There had been, I need scarcely say, many protestations of love and faithfulness between the young lovers; and when it came to saying good-bye to Jeanne, Tina's tears had flowed freely.

"They are not for you, Louis," she had cried out, laughing in the midst of them; "it is Jeanne that I cannot bear to leave." But, by the time the pier at St. Heliers was reached, her good spirits had come back, and at the last she stood smiling on the

vessel's deck, waving her hands gaily and crying "abitôt"—the only bit of "patois" she was carrying away with her—to Louis, standing with wistful eyes upon the shore.

After this, perhaps, you think that things went on in their old groove at La Tourelle. How this might have been under other and happier circumstances, I cannot tell; but, as it was, poor Jeanne fell ill. She had not been quite her old self for some time past; the thorough wetting on the day of the picnic had done its work. Before Tina had been gone a week her friend lay delirious, in the clutches of fever. What hearts ached in the old house, as the weary days went by! Louis wandered all day about the garden, or down by the shore, never beyond call. They told him his name was ever on Jeanne's lips. One day they let him see her, but she did not recognise her old companion, and went on still crying out his name. Louis was broken-hearted, her voice stabbed him to the quick. Tina's letters, that at first came regularly enough, brought him no comfort. As time went on they came less and less regularly, and at last not at all. It scarcely seemed to trouble him. Jeanne was getting better then, all danger was past, there was nothing for her to do but to get well again as fast as possible. It seemed to Louis that nothing could ever trouble him any more.

One morning towards noon, as he was waiting for her in the garden, where she came now every day, he saw Marie coming towards him; it was mail-day, and she had a letter in her hand. Somehow Louis knew at once from whom it was. He took a turn or two about the garden before he opened it. When at last he did so, this is what he read:

"MY DEAR LOUIS,—I wonder if you are very angry with me. It is a long time since I wrote, and I do not think I should be writing now, but there is something I want to tell you. I still think you are the dearest boy in the world, but I am afraid we do not love one another as people do who wish to live together all their lives. I, at least, could never live all my life in your little island of which you are so fond. It is pretty enough, but it is so small—the sound of the sea is never out of one's ears, and one sees the same faces always, always. I am fond of change, and I want to see the world. There is some one here—he is ever so old, and I have known him all my life—he is for ever travelling, here, there, and everywhere. He has asked me to go with him, and I have said 'Yes.' Can you

forgive me? I give you back to Jeanne, dear little Jeanne, who loves you, who has loved you all her life. In your last you told me she was getting better every day; by this time she should be quite well. Give her my dear, dear love. I shall never see her again, but I shall never forget her—never.—Your affectionate friend,

"TINA."

The blow had fallen at last. As Louis read the careless little missive that seemed so like Tina herself, his face flushed, his hands were trembling. A knowledge that he ought to be feeling very miserable, mingled with a strange sort of consciousness that he was feeling nothing of the sort, possessed him. Instead, something was crying out within him that he was free. Free! and Jeanne loved him—had loved him always. Was it so? If only it were true! He raised his eyes, and saw her coming towards him, pale, fragile still, but the old sweet smile upon her face. He went hastily to meet her.

"Come," he said, "your seat is ready waiting for you, and I have something to tell you." She saw the letter in his hand, and looked at him with kind, enquiring eyes. "Yes," he said, "it is from her—from Tina. Cannot you guess what it is she has written to tell me at last?"

He had seated himself by Jeanne's side; he had caught one of her white trembling hands in his.

"Oh, Jeanne!" he cried, "cannot you guess it all? She cares for me no longer, and I—it was a dream, a fever—I am free!"

When Mrs. Le Quesne came some half-hour later to look for Jeanne, she saw at once what had happened. She sent Jeanne off to her sofa, to beef-tea—goodness knows what.

"Do you want her to have another fever?" she said to Louis. Then she went and found the colonel. "It has all come right," she cried, between tears and laughter; "it is 'la p'tite' who will come into my old shoes, after all."

Marie, of course, soon knew all about it. She could scarcely contain herself; she scolded Louis, she petted "la p'tite"; she triumphed over the absent "Mamzelle Tina"—Tina, who would only have laughed could she have heard her.

"What will Mr. Byng say when he comes to hear?" Marie said to her mistress; "the poor young man who came every day to enquire after Mamzelle Jeanne, when she lay at death's door."

For myself, I do not know what Mr. Byng

said. I only know that he shortly went away on leave. It was getting autumn then; it was winter before he came back. George Barry had got leave too; it was he who came alone to La Tourelle on their return, and took back a piece of wedding-cake "for Byng to sleep upon."

A DANGEROUS SECRET.

By W. W. FENN

CHAPTER I.

LET the first letter which Mr. Derrick Smith, artist, wrote from Rome to his friend Swainson, begin this story.

"129, Via Babuino, Piano, 4, Rome,
"April 11th, 1878.

"MY DEAR SWAINSON,—I carried out my plan of travel as I told you I should, and at six-thirty on Sunday morning I found myself at the railway terminus here, rather tired, and glad it was over. The run was very continuous and fatiguing, as, with the exception of an hour at Paris, there was hardly time to get food at any of the halting-places. But from London to Rome in less than four days is sharp work, and such a journey cannot be performed without a certain amount of inconvenience. At Dover I met two men I knew, and travelled with them as far as Dijon, where, after dinner, we parted, they going on an Easter holiday excursion to the Cornice, and I down south. I also found a companion who was coming straight through, an Irishman and a very pleasant fellow, and as it turned out, I was glad to have had his company, inasmuch as it lessened to some extent my personal apprehensions during a bad quarter of an hour which I experienced in the train between here and Florence.

"I will describe it as clearly as I can, particularly as I cannot help fancying it may have some bearing, direct or indirect, upon the little commission which I undertook to execute for you. Perhaps I am even wrong in telling you about it, for fear it should unnecessarily disturb you. Moreover, nothing has come of it as yet, nor will anything, I dare say, only there are one or two circumstances, as you will see, connected with it, which appear to justify my suspicions. You will know whether aught exists in reference to your acquaintance with the lady, which would give my idea any reasonable ground to stand upon. For the present, rest content in the assurance that I have the packet of letters quite safe

under lock and key, and that they shall be delivered into the hands of their owner as soon as she shall arrive in Rome, or at least on the very first opportunity I have of giving them to her unobserved.

"We left Florence by the mail-train at ten on Saturday night, in a first-class carriage; four passengers—an Italian lady and gentleman, the Irishman aforesaid, and myself. All soon fell asleep, until about midnight, being slightly disturbed by a stoppage, I drowsily observed that the Italians got out, and I fancied that my companion and I were left alone to continue our repose, which we did. In about an hour I awoke, and to my surprise saw, sitting in the corner at the farther end of the seat opposite to me, a man whom I certainly had never observed get in. The thin blue silk blind was drawn across the lamp in the roof of the carriage, but there was sufficient light for me to see that he was a rough-looking customer—rough, that is, as far as his dress was concerned, which was that of an Italian peasant, with broad-brimmed, high-peaked hat, etc. But a second and more scrutinising glance, which I took without moving, showed me that his face and hands were not quite in accord with his garments; the former being refined, with a finely-chiselled nose and chin, whilst the latter were white and delicate, with long, sinewy, taper-tipped fingers.

"Although somewhat disturbed by this apparition, I, fortunately, was still too drowsy to rouse up thoroughly, so I lay stretched out along the seat as I was, contemplating him for a minute or two. As I did so, it seemed that his face was not altogether unfamiliar to me, though the broad brim of his hat threw his brow and eyes into such deep shadow that I could not discern them distinctly, and thus at first it was only an impression which he gave me of somebody whom I must have recently met.

"Presently he advanced one foot slowly towards the seat opposite to him, as if feeling beneath it, but touching nothing there, he dropped on his knees, and peeped under the valance. Still finding the space empty, he resumed his place, and gazed curiously at our two tranquil forms, apparently apprehensive lest either of us might have observed his action. Concluding, doubtless, that we were both fast asleep—for the shadow from my hat hid my eyes from him, just as his were hidden from me—he seemed reassured, and then stooped down to look beneath his own seat.

"Naturally rendered suspicious by all this, I debated what to do, and although I thought two need not be afraid of one, it occurred to me that he might have a knife about him, and be up to a brigandish trick or two, and that it would be better to arrive sound in Rome than be in any way maimed through a scuffle; so I decided not to arouse my friend, but to remain quiet for a while, and pretend for a little longer to be asleep. I assure you it was no fun to be thus lying and watching the fellow, and my sensations were anything but agreeable when I saw him suddenly slip at full length upon the floor, and in the most marvellously serpent-like manner, glide beneath the seat opposite to me, on which my friend was asleep. He was then quite out of sight, and remained so for several minutes. But presently out came a hand and arm very gently from under the valance, straight in the direction of my small hand-bag which was standing on the floor close beside me.

"Now I may as well tell you, that in that bag were the precious documents which you had entrusted to me. I had transferred them from my breast-pocket to the hand-bag whilst I was dining in the station restaurant at Dijon. The place was very crowded and full of bustle, and I noticed, more than once, a tall gentlemanly-looking man of Italian aspect, rather seedily dressed, standing near the buffet, and eyeing me keenly. My attention was particularly drawn to him by the way in which he always appeared to be watching me, whenever I looked up. Our eyes met constantly, but directly he saw that I saw him he would drop his, and I wondered who the deuce he could be, and what his motive for staring so was. All on a sudden, by a flash of intuition, I recalled this circumstance, directly that hand and arm were stretched out towards the bag, and I knew, in an instant, of whom the face of our mysterious fellow-traveller reminded me. It was the man who had been watching me the day before at Dijon! Differently dressed—disguised, indeed, as he now was, I felt sure it was the same person, and I also felt sure that it was this bag which he was especially coveting. I do not know why I conceived all this, or why I attributed so much importance to it, but these are the little facts which gave me an idea that they may not be unconnected with you and the packet. But to proceed with my story.

"Just as the fellow's hand was within an inch of the bag, and I was about to move

it out of his reach, the engine-whistle warned us that we were approaching a station, and never did any sound bring such relief to my mind before. Needless to say the arm disappeared in a second, and needless to say that I then gently woke my Irish friend, and told him in a whisper what was up, but to lie quite still until we stopped, when we would give the alarm, and have the intruder removed.

"The station proved to be Chiusi, and the scene which followed, with the guards, porters, and people, was highly diverting. Directly I mentioned the fact that a probable thief was lying concealed beneath the seat to the two gendarmes, who, as you know, are always so officious at these stations, they pounced in upon him like a couple of terriers upon a rat in a hole. They dragged him out savagely by the heels, and he was immediately searched, but as he had taken nothing belonging to us, we were relieved from all further concern with the affair, and the culprit was marched off in custody.

"The guard of the train remarked that, in all probability, he had peeped in through the windows on the further side of the carriage at the last halting-place, and that, seeing we were asleep, he had crept softly in at the unlocked door, just as the train was starting. 'These contadini are always hanging about the stations,' said the official, 'ready to lay hands on any portable articles within reach. Madonna! but this was a bold attempt, and it will cost the fellow dear.'

"Yes, I thought, as I meditated on the adventure during the remainder of my journey, and it might have cost me dear, had I not awoke, or had I been alone, or, indeed, had many other things occurred which did not occur. As it was, we were well out of the business, and I really should have thought no more of it, but for the strange resemblance between the two faces of the men. This, in fact, might hardly have struck me, but for the odd association which it seemed to have with your commission, for I gleaned something, when you gave me the packet, which set me thinking that there might be a third party mixed up in the affair. If I am right, I still cannot get it out of my head that this same third party was none other than the Italian at Dijon, or the fellow in the railway-carriage, or both.

When the fellow was examined by the gendarmes on the platform, it was more than ever evident to me that his dress was a disguise—he was no contadino. The

rough, brown, soiled coat and baggy trousers concealed that beneath which was no more en suite with them than were the face and hands of the wearer. Whether this fact led to anything, or was even noticed by the officials at the time, I do not know. I noticed it. This scratch will give you a fair idea of the fellow's head."

Having read thus far in his friend's letter, Henry Swainson paused, and closely examined the rough but clever sketch in pen and ink of the head of a handsome Italian of about five-and-thirty, which occupied the opposite page of the paper. Presently he let it fall on the table by which he was sitting, and rising, began to pace the room as he muttered to himself, "Caldini, without a doubt! He saw me give Smith that blue envelope on the steps of the club, when he followed me there that night, and knew what was in it. One's only hope lies in his being laid by the heels by the law. If he is not, he will follow up those letters like a sleuth-hound, and I shall not know a moment's peace until I am assured they are in the poor lady's hands."

CHAPTER II.

YEARS before we see Mr. Henry Swainson engrossed by this letter, and whilst he was reading for the bar, he would, like most young men, occasionally vary the monotony of his studies of an evening by looking in at the various entertainments of the town. He was a steady worker, but he gave himself reasonable relaxation, and having a nice musical taste he naturally frequented such places as afforded him the most gratification in this direction. But he did not limit his search after melody to the more fashionable quarters. He was fond of seeing life and studying character, and being somewhat of a speculative and philosophical turn of mind, he enjoyed watching audiences of every degree, almost as much as he did listening to performances. In this way it came about that one evening he strolled off to a music-hall in a Northern suburb, an advertisement of which had caught his eye. He seldom found himself bored after the fashion of our modern youth, and was always disposed to take a kindly view of mankind, so that on this occasion, if he did not expect to reap much musical pleasure, he knew he should find enough to satisfy his propensity for observing men and manners. To his intense surprise, however, he enjoyed a great musical treat. A very charming-

looking young lady, described in the programme as *La Signorina Julia Terasco*, "*The Queen of Song*," quite startled him by her talent. He was immediately struck by the very superior excellence of the young singer, and he felt amazed that so fine and promising an artist should not have been snapped up by some manager in a higher sphere. After listening to her with infinite delight, he determined to pay a second visit to the establishment, and having had his first impressions confirmed he began to talk about her to one of his friends at the Wits' Club. This was a man considerably older than Swainson, but notable as being one of the best musical critics of the day, and on this ground their club acquaintanceship had ripened into a strong friendship. Sir Charles Vandellan knew everybody, as the phrase goes; but being a bachelor, and a baronet of limited means, and having generally artistic tastes, he affected the slightly Bohemian society to be found at the "Wits," almost in preference to that which his social position opened to him.

"You must come and hear her, Sir Charles," said Swainson to him after he had critically described the singer. "If I know anything about music, I have found a real prize. It's rather a long way to go, but you will find her well worth the journey. Say now, will you come to-night?"

But Sir Charles was engaged that evening, and for several following, and when at length the visit came off, to their infinite disappointment the Signorina Julia Terasco was not singing. Indeed she never sang in public again. Thus Swainson only saw and heard her twice.

Being called to the bar shortly after this, and going to India to practise, the Signorina Julia Terasco soon faded from his memory, and eight years elapsed before anything happened to recall her.

"Hallo, Swainson, how long have you been back? I thought you were in India!"

"So I was six weeks ago, and for some things I wish I was there now. This English climate hasn't improved since I have been away. It is confoundingly chilly for June, surely? I have not felt so cold for eight years, I think, as I do to-day."

"Have you been away eight years? Bless my soul! I could not have believed it. How the time passes! But you are not a bit altered, my dear fellow; you

look uncommonly well, to be sure. You wear better than many of us, I'll be hanged if you don't. By the way, I'll tell you another man I saw in the club to-day, whom I haven't seen for years, and who seems to wear equally well—old Sir Charles Vandellan; he has not turned up here for ages. I don't know how long it is since I saw him, and he looks as young as ever and as fit as a fiddle, just as you do. I wonder how you fellows manage it; I wish you would pass on the receipt."

"Oh, is Sir Charles in town? I should like to see him again. Somebody told me he had come into some property, and had altogether retired from London life. Lives far away in the country or somewhere—quite out of the world. It must be a great change for him with his tastes."

"Go and ask him how he likes it—see, there he is now, going into the coffee-room. He'll be glad to see you, no doubt. You used to be great cronies at one time—as fond of music as ever, Swainson?"

But Henry Swainson did not stop to answer this last enquiry, made by one of the numerous acquaintances whom he came across on his first visit to the Wits' Club a few days after his temporary return to England.

Far more cordial than any of the recognitions he had so far received at this old haunt was that accorded to him by the hale, fresh-coloured, aristocratic-looking gentleman, whom he now followed into the coffee-room.

"Swainson, I am delighted to meet you," said Sir Charles. "This is most fortunate. I am seldom in London now—never for more than a day or two at a time, and I am very glad to have come at the moment of your return. I hope I shall see something of you during your stay. You must spare me a few days down at my little place near Malvern. I have turned Benedick since you went away, and I shall be charmed to present you."

The Indian barrister's response to this greeting was equally hearty, and the result of that afternoon's chat was an agreement that he should pay his old friend a short visit in the course of the following week.

The residence of Sir Charles Vandellan was a delightfully-situated villa in the neighbourhood of Malvern Wells, and was looking, together with its surroundings, at its very best on the sunny June afternoon when Mr. Swainson drove in at the gates in the little T-cart in which his host had

been over to the station to fetch him. As they alighted, the sound of a woman's voice singing at a piano came softly through the French window of the drawing-room, which opened upon an ample lawn and flower-garden at the side of the house.

"Ah," said Sir Charles, "there is Lady Vandellan contending with the nightingales, as usual. Come round this way, and you will hear that my account of her is not exaggerated."

The two friends passed on by a path leading from the drive among the rhododendrons, and stood for a while at a favourable point listening to the enchanting strains of Haydn's old canzonet, "My mother bids me bind my hair," as they were poured out with exquisite charm by the singer. Whilst Swainson thus remained his host bent upon him a keen glance, as if to observe the effect the song should produce. When it was over, he said, gently rubbing his hands with an air of profound satisfaction:

"There, I don't think you ever heard that better sung or with more taste and refinement. What a fortune she would have made on the stage, or in the concert-room—eh? But for my own good luck in finding such a treasure I could almost wish for the sake of art she had been obliged to earn her own living; she is a real loss to the profession."

"Indeed, yes," replied Swainson in rather an absent manner; "it was quite perfect—quite."

They were about to move forward when the voice again burst forth, this time in the execution of a series of brilliant roudades, entirely overwhelming in their volume and the certainty and correctness of their tone.

"Stay," whispered Swainson, "pray let me listen. It is magnificent;" and he stood for several minutes with his head thrown a little on one side, looking gravely delighted and completely absorbed.

"Now, come along," said Sir Charles at length, when there was another pause in the music, "and let me introduce you."

With this they emerged from their hiding-place, crossed the lawn, and entered the room by the open window.

The lady immediately rose from the piano, and coming forward, shook hands with the guest with every appropriate expression of hospitality. She was a tall and graceful woman, a little past her first youth perhaps, but only so much so as to

lend to her slender figure that roundness of matronhood which told you that in this respect at least she could never have looked better. In her face alone were there any hints of the advance of time, but being olive-skinned and dark, the practised eye would detect that these were due more to her complexion and peculiar style of beauty than to actual years; she probably looked older than she really was. If, in addition, there lingered traces of some bygone care and suffering, the bright smile displaying a set of pearly teeth, and the soft lustre of the long-lashed eyes, assured Swainson confidently that she was thoroughly happy in the present. Her features were just sufficiently clear of the sculptor's or painter's ideal of perfection of form and proportion, to give to her countenance that charm which ordinary mortals find more attractive. It made her, in fact, an extremely pretty, rather than a very beautiful woman, and her speaking voice being equally melodious with that of her singing, Swainson felt that to live in her company would be, as it were, to live always in "a concord of sweet sounds."

Knowing her husband's passionate love for music, he could well understand how such a being might very easily have turned him from what his friends had looked upon as a confirmed bachelorhood. But he found himself irresistibly wondering, throughout the first five minutes of conventional talk, where Sir Charles could have discovered a person apparently so peculiarly suited to his tastes. Not that this wonder was exactly born of his introduction to the lady—it was only increased by that, for the rapturous way in which Sir Charles had spoken of his wife to his friend, and had yet said never a word as to where he met her, had set Swainson speculating upon this point from the first.

"Sir Charles tells me you are as great a musical fanatic as he is, Mr. Swainson," said Lady Vandellan, as, later on, the three were sitting down to dinner, "so I hope at least you will not find us too dull for you here. We are a most domestic pair, I assure you, and see very few people. Nor, I am afraid, can we offer you any sport. I believe there is some fishing to be had not far—"

"Oh, thanks," replied the guest, "I am no sportsman. My only hobby, besides music, is drawing a little, but when I can get music in such perfection as I shall here, I could never find the country dull."

"You are very good to say so."

"I am perfectly sincere, I assure you. From what I heard this afternoon, I am confident one does not hear often in society such a voice and such musical ability as yours, Lady Vandellan. You can scarcely be called an amateur. You must have worked very hard to have done such complete justice to your rare gifts, or, may I say, genius?"

The hostess blushed as, dropping her eyes, she said indifferently:

"Oh yes, of course, when one has strong love for an art one naturally works hard at it."

"I am afraid not always, Lady Vandellan. It does not follow, unless one is obliged for some reason. You have studied in Italy, I imagine; you could scarcely have acquired your fine style in England."

The blush deepened, and the lady still kept her gaze averted from Swainson's face, as Sir Charles, answering hastily for her, said:

"Yes; but not since she was a child—not since she was a child."

The conversation on this subject then dropped suddenly, as if by common consent, and Swainson could not help feeling that the early studies of his hostess were not to be enquired into. Intuitively he felt he had been approaching forbidden ground, and this idea was increased by that marked absence of any reference made by Sir Charles to his wife's early days or his first acquaintance with her.

"It is no affair of mine, after all," thought the young barrister; "why should I bother myself about it?"

And yet throughout the whole of dinner he found he was bothering himself about it, and by degrees a strange sensation crept over him, as he grew more familiar with Lady Vandellan's appearance, that, in some way or other, it was an affair of his, or one at least in which he had some interest.

"Had he ever seen her before?"

That was a question which at last kept perpetually presenting itself to him, and finally, as from time to time he looked at her, he answered it in the affirmative. But where? For the life of him he could not imagine. The first notes of her voice, as he heard them through the open window, had seemed to remind him, in their exquisite quality, not exactly of a voice he remembered so much as of a person, an appearance he remembered. And now was this the person? Was this the appearance of which the tones of that voice had reminded him? He thought it was. Putting these

two sensations together so preoccupied him that he was by no means so conversational during dinner as he might have been. On the whole, the meal was rather dull, and it was not until they were all three in the drawing-room again, and Lady Vandellan at Swainson's request sat down at the piano, and music was again in the ascendant, that anything like vivacity returned.

She continued singing for a considerable time, whilst Swainson and his host sat in rapt enjoyment, the latter ever and anon by glance or brief remark appealing to the former (who never took his eyes off the singer) for confirmation of the praises he was for ever bestowing on his wife.

"Do you ever sing 'Ah, non Credea,' from 'La Sonnambula'?" presently asked the guest during a pause.

"Yes," was the brief reply; "would you like to hear it?" and the lady sang the song forthwith. Whilst she was doing so, Sir Charles walked to the open window and stood with his back to the room, looking out into the summer night. At the conclusion of the music he gently clapped his hands and murmured "Brava, brava!" but without turning round. Swainson had gone up to the piano, and as the last notes died away he joined in the applause, and said, with some significance:

"I have not heard that for years, and I never heard it sung so well before, but once."

"Ah," said Lady Vandellan, "and by whom was it sung? I hope it does not revive any tender memories, Mr. Swainson," she added, half laughing, but without looking up, for he had spoken almost in a whisper which might have sounded pathetic to her unsuspecting ears.

"No, indeed," he replied slowly; "no tender memories, Lady Vandellan—only rather strange ones."

She stole a quick glance up at him for a moment as she still toyed with the keys, and said: "How so?"

"Well, I remember hearing that song sung at a strange place; I mean it was strange that one should have heard the song so well sung as it was there."

"And who was the singer?" was the nervous enquiry through the running accompaniment she continued playing.

"Oh, no one you ever heard of," said Swainson carelessly, but not loudly; "no one anybody ever heard much of. She was called, I think, Julia Terasco."

Lady Vandellan ceased playing with her left hand, and raising it nervously to her lips as she turned a deadly pale face up to Swainson, said in a terrified whisper: "For Heaven's sake, Mr. Swainson, never mention that name here."

At that moment Sir Charles strolled back from the window; his wife resumed her idle practice on the instrument; and the guest making some commonplace remark aloud, flung himself into an easy-chair as he muttered beneath his breath: "By Jove, I was right!"

It was not until the forenoon of the next day was well advanced that Henry Swainson chanced to be left alone with Lady Vandellan. He had been much perturbed in mind and spirit since the suspicions which were gradually aroused in him whilst he sat watching and listening to his fair hostess the previous evening, had been confirmed by the mention of the name of Julia Terasco.

Had Lady Vandellan concealed from her husband the fact that she had once been a public singer? or was she merely anxious to warn her guest from reverting to a subject which it was desirable on all accounts should be forgotten? Her alarm at the discovery he had made, inclined him, much against his wish, to believe that the first was the correct one, but then the absence of any attempt on her part to deny her identity, although she had of course not actually admitted it, argued in favour of the second; and this he most fervently hoped, for her own sake, as well as for Sir Charles's, would prove to be the case. But after he had tormented himself for the best part of the night by trying to arrive at a definite conclusion, he gave up the attempt, and determined to wait until he should have an opportunity of getting some explanation from the lady herself.

In the morning he thought he observed in her an anxiety equal to his own for an occasion on which she might give it him, and when at length it came she lost not a moment in taking advantage of it.

They were strolling about the sweet-smelling garden, and Sir Charles having something to look after in the stables, left his wife and friend together.

"I hardly know," she began, directly her husband was gone, "I hardly know how to speak to you, Mr. Swainson, on what I am sure must have troubled you as much as it has me. But since you have discovered

my unhappy secret, I feel there is only one course left to me—I must trust you. It is my only hope, for if I do not you will think worse of me than perhaps you do now, and I shall be in greater danger than I am at present. In fact, my only safety seems to be in my appealing to you, for sheer pity's sake, not to betray me."

Swainson felt grieved to the heart at these words, for he saw they meant that his old friend knew nothing of his wife's antecedents.

"Sir Charles," he said, "is not aware then that you were once——"

"No, no," she continued, "of course not, of course not. Alas! what would I give that I had not been so misguided, so weak, so wicked. But, Mr. Swainson, if I have no right to ask you to be my friend, under the circumstances and after so short an acquaintance; if I am unable to make you one, I appeal to you as Sir Charles's friend. Do not—if you value his peace of mind—do not, please, undeceive him. It can do no good now. It is too late, and we are so happy—he is so happy—do not disturb our peace."

She said this with such an appealing look in her beautiful eyes, that Swainson was touched to the quick as he responded:

"Pray, Lady Vandellan, do not misunderstand me. I am not an ogre of such rigid and strict views as to be deaf to reason or to an honest appeal."

"I do not misunderstand you, I think," said she, "otherwise I should not dare to talk to you as I am doing. Your face, and the expression it wore last night—the delicate way in which you hinted that you recognised me—told me, as your manner does now, that I may trust you."

"You may," he said candidly.

"And I will," she replied. "When Sir Charles asked me to marry him I was so overwhelmed, so overjoyed, that I did not stop to think. I accepted him on the instant, before I could realise the wrong I was doing him in consenting to become his wife without telling him the whole of my early career. When I had once consented, I had not the courage to jeopardise the happiness he offered me by risking a revelation which might mar it; for I had learned to understand how sensitive his nature is, and how he hated the idea of a public life for women. I know now how wrong I was to withhold the truth from him. But, as I say, I had not the courage, although many times I have trembled at the thought of being discovered; yet I

have calmed my anxieties by remembering how very remote the chance of such a thing was. Living the retired life we have done for the last four years—ever since we were married, indeed—it began to seem impossible that anyone would ever know me."

Lady Vandellan paused, and then added with a sigh of the deepest distress :

"Oh, Mr. Swainson, to think that you, Sir Charles's friend, should have been the first to penetrate the truth !"

"Better a friend than an enemy," said the young barrister cheerfully, "unless he happened to be what is called a 'good-natured friend.' Pray, Lady Vandellan, make your mind easy," he continued seriously ; "have no fear. I see Sir Charles returning across the paddock. You may rely on my discretion, I give you my word. Shall we walk towards him ?"

Time passed. By April in the following year, Swainson's stay in England was coming to an end. He had written to tell the Vandellans that he feared he should not have time to run down to Malvern to say good-bye before he returned to India, when a letter in reply told him they would be passing through town on their way to Rome, and that they hoped they might see him for a moment then.

"All roads lead to Rome, and everybody seems to be going to Rome this spring," said Swainson a day or two afterwards to his friend Derrick Smith, as they met in the smoking-room of the Wits' Club ; "and so you are off there with easel and palette, are you, Smith ?"

"Yes," replied the artist, "to-morrow night—I go slick through without stopping. Can I do anything for you there ?"

"Thanks, no. Our friend, Sir Charles Vandellan, is going soon. You know him, don't you ?"

"No," said Smith, "not personally. I know he is a member of the club, but he never comes here."

"Very seldom. He is not often in town. Well, I am afraid I shall not see you again, old fellow, but you might drop me a line. I must go and write some letters now, so good luck to you, and good-bye," and Swainson strolled home to his lodgings in Duke Street.

The clock at St. James's Palace had just struck nine as he let himself in with his latch-key. To his surprise he was met in the hall by a servant, who informed

him that there was a lady in his room waiting to see him.

"She has been here an hour, sir," said the man, "and it is most important, she declares."

Before the barrister had time almost to wonder who it could be, he found himself in the presence of Lady Vandellan.

CHAPTER III.

No beautiful or accomplished woman reaches the age of thirty, without having passed through some more or less serious affairs of the heart, especially if she be an heiress in her own right.

Juliet Mayne was no exception to this rule. She was barely twenty-one when her father died, and she found herself the possessor of an income of nearly three thousand a year, a fortune which came to her from her mother's side, and in which Lionel Mayne, Esq., her father, had only had a life-interest. When a young man of limited means, and, as his friends had decided, of idle habits, he had dabbled in art. Finding his way to Rome for the furtherance of what he was pleased to call his studies, he fell naturally into the easy-going Bohemian life prevailing in the Eternal City. Coming of a good Roman Catholic family, and being extremely handsome, he had no difficulty in entering the best society. There he met his fate in the person of a wealthy and charming young Italian girl of noble birth. A marriage was arranged with the consent of all parties, and if his friends at the Café Greco cordially and sincerely congratulated him on his good fortune, they did so with an honest regret that it would deprive them of his society ; for my gentleman no sooner found himself deeply in love, and relieved of all petty anxieties, than he determined to abandon art, and lead the life of an English country gentleman.

Thus it came to pass that for several years he resided in one of the hunting counties of his native land, with his young Italian bride. But although her resources were ample, and arrived with the utmost regularity from the family estate near Tivoli, they were insufficient to meet the extravagant outlay in which her lord and master indulged. It was fortunate for the poor lady that he could lay no hand upon the capital (that matter had been carefully arranged by deed of settlement, etc.), or he would soon have brought himself back to his old impecunious condition. As it was, they had simply to retrench, but as

he refused to do this in the face of his county acquaintances, they repaired to London, where, not long afterwards, his now neglected wife died, leaving a little girl of seven, the only offspring of the marriage, to the tender mercies of her shiftless, selfish, but not unkind father.

Handsome as was the income he derived from his life-interest in the little Juliet's property, he by no means spent as much of it as he ought on the child's general education; and when it was discovered that she was developing a magnificent soprano voice, and was promising to become a very beautiful woman, he secretly determined that she should adopt the stage as a profession. With this intention, therefore, when she was about sixteen, he took her to Italy, and for a while placed her under the best masters.

It was during this period that a certain Giovanni Caldini, a tenor singer of some repute, first made her acquaintance. He held a prominent position in the Theatre of La Scala at Milan, was an extremely clever and versatile actor, combining, with a fair voice, qualities as a gymnast and pantomimist which alone would have made him celebrated.

He bore, however, but a very indifferent character, and his notorious gallantries had, on more than one occasion, brought him into evil prominence before the not very squeamish public of the northern capital.

Mr. Lionel Mayne, although supposed to be residing in Milan, as the legitimate guardian of his young daughter, gave but little heed to her private pursuits. Assiduous always in his attention to everything which related to her studies, he nevertheless neglected her in all other respects, and it was only after many warnings, anonymous and otherwise, that he condescended to exercise his parental authority, and put a stop to the rather compromising acquaintance which had sprung up between Juliet and the notorious Signor Caldini. But he was too late, the affair had gone too far. Unwise and ill-judging in this, as in most matters, he took such violent measures in his efforts to terminate the acquaintance, that one fine morning he suddenly discovered to his dismay that his authority had been set at defiance, and that his daughter had fled, no one knew whither; but as Signor Giovanni Caldini simultaneously disappeared, and broke his engagement at the theatre, it was fairly assumed that the two had departed together.

Overwhelmed with remorse, not unmingled with chagrin, Lionel Mayne became a broken-down man.

He wandered half over Europe in search of the fugitives, but could never obtain a clue to more than one of them—his daughter (of the man he heard nothing)—yet on her track he always came too late, until finally, after two years' vain search, he found her alone in London, earning her living, under the name of Julia Terasco, by singing at a music-hall. Much as appearances had been against her, she had never lost her right to her parent's love and respect. In truth, she had not even left Milan in company with Caldini, although she had appointed to meet him in Paris, which she did, but only to leave him again within a few hours. Taking advantage of the young girl's terror at her father's violence, her lover had found little difficulty in persuading her to this step, under the assurance that when in the French capital she should become his wife. Once there, however, he showed himself in his true colours, and refused to fulfil his promise. Panic-stricken, horrified by his perfidy, the girlish affection which she had conceived for him was destroyed, and in its place there grew an unspeakable aversion. The Italian blood in her veins asserted itself, and she fled from him, even as she had fled from her father. Eluding all pursuit she reached Vienna, where her musical powers soon enabled her to support herself. Thence she drifted from place to place, until she reached London. She had always avoided Italy, being ashamed and afraid to return to her father, foreseeing how much her flight must have imperilled her good name, and how difficult, even impossible, it would be to persuade him of her innocence of all wrong.

No longer vengeful or angry, broken in health and spirit, the father died very soon after he had rescued his child from comparative poverty, and the sordid though honest life she was leading, and, as has been said, Juliet Mayne, not yet quite twenty-one—this young, accomplished, beautiful, and unhappy scion of a noble Italian family—found herself wealthy and independent, but utterly alone in the world.

At first she had thought of returning to Italy, but eventually effecting an arrangement with an elderly English lady, an old friend of her mother's, as chaperon and companion, she retired with her to Cheltenham. Here, for a while, they lived in great retirement, but gradually Juliet

Mayne's musical abilities brought her into unavoidable notice, and by degrees into a little of the best local society. Here, by accident, she met Sir Charles Vandellan, who was visiting in the neighbourhood, and notwithstanding a certain disparity in their years, a marriage was the result, as we have seen.

This was the sum and substance of what Henry Swainson learned in the course of the long interview which followed upon his finding Lady Vandellan waiting for him in his rooms. This was the history she gave of her life, after he had shown her that if he was to help her at all in her trouble, she must have perfect confidence in him, and keep nothing back.

She began by explaining that having acknowledged her fault and her difficulty to him, she felt he was the fittest and only person she could further trust or look to for advice in an impending peril. She was in a state of the greatest possible excitement and distress, and after briefly stating that she and her husband were in town on their way to Rome sooner than they expected, and that she had come out on the pretext of seeing her milliner, said, "But in reality, Mr. Swainson, it is you I have come to see, first as a friend, secondly as a lawyer. One deceit only leads to another, you see, and Heaven only knows how many more I must resort to if I am to preserve Sir Charles's happiness. After what you discovered at Malvern, I feel that you are the only person who can help me—who can save me, perhaps, if you will, when you know the worst.

The young barrister endeavoured to reassure her, and she continued:

"Unhappily, you are not the only person who has recognised me, who has found me out rather, and he, above all, is the one most to be dreaded. Oh, I little knew the risk I ran even in our retirement; you were the first to show it me—and now, now—"

Here the poor lady broke down, and became for a time quite incoherent. At this point it was that Swainson began to put such questions as ended in his eliciting the whole truth. When at length he was in full possession of it, he said:

"Tell me candidly, Lady Vandellan, how much does Sir Charles know of your life?"

"In the main he knows everything, save of my acquaintance with Caldini—of that he never heard. Help me,

help me still to keep that from him, Mr. Swainson, for, should he ever learn it—

Ah! it does not bear thinking of, and yet this may happen at any moment, for it is Caldini who has discovered me. How, I know not, but he has. I have seen him, spoken with him, and he threatens me. He also knows that we are going to Rome on business connected with my estate, for it was upon the pretence that he came about this that he presented himself suddenly at Malvern only three days ago. Imagine my consternation, my horror, when, using the name of my agent or steward in Rome, he was shown into the library, where Sir Charles and I were sitting together. An adept always in disguises, he deceived me by his voice and manner, and I did not know him at first, but all in a moment I recognised him, and I thought I should have died with terror. I know not how I hid my feelings, but I did, and while he was pretending to talk on the business which had brought him, and with which he appeared to be conversant, he contrived to give me this letter unseen," and Lady Vandellan placed a folded paper in Swainson's hand. "You will see the threat it contains," she added, as he opened it.

"Ah, you forget," said Swainson, running his eye over it, "I am not Italian scholar enough to read it."

"Well, no matter; he simply states that unless I provide him with ample funds for the rest of his life he will disclose all to my husband."

"But," enquired Swainson, "has he any proofs of your early acquaintance?"

"Alas, yes! he has fourteen letters of mine to himself—letters that would seem to compromise me, and I have come to you to entreat, to implore you to try and get them from him—to see if you cannot make some terms with him to secure his silence. I would pay him anything in reason for the letters. Whilst he holds them I should never know a moment's peace, for I could not trust him not to use them. I should be for ever in his power."

The young barrister pondered for a while, and then said:

"As you truly say, one deceit leads to another, Lady Vandellan, and there is no help for you now but in deceit. We cannot stay to question the morality. I must get those letters for you, and we must then outface, defy, deny this fellow's statement, if he should make any. He could prove nothing without the letters!"

"No," she interrupted eagerly.

"Well, then, tell me where I may find him. If I can save you, be sure I will. I will do so for Sir Charles's sake, remember, if not for your own. His happiness depends on his ignorance, and, wrong as it may sound, I will preserve his happiness at any cost."

Lady Vandellan then gave Swainson directions where to find Caldini in London. "You must seek him at once," she said, "as he only gives me a month to make up my mind. Here are bank-notes for six or seven hundred pounds; make the best bargain you can with him. If that sum will not satisfy him, here is a blank cheque on my private account, which I have signed, and which you can fill up for any further amount that may be necessary. I must leave all to you, as I cannot see you again. I must go now. We start for Florence at six to-morrow morning, and we shall not be in Rome till the end of the month. If you succeed in getting the letters, send them to me there by some safe means, to the address you will find here with the money and cheque."

Swainson took the envelope she handed to him, and, with many assurances that she might rely on him, and amidst a torrent of gratitude from her, he eventually saw her safely into a cab in St. James's Street, as the Palace clock rang out twelve.

He was so absorbed by the strange events which this unexpected interview had revealed to him, and with the position in which it had placed him, that he did not observe the tall figure of a seedily-dressed man of foreign aspect, following close upon his heels, as he returned to his door. Just as he reached it the man came up, and thoroughly startled him by saying, in clear but broken English: "Sir, your pardon, but I can save you some trouble, if I guess right. You seek to speak with one Caldini—I am that one."

Swainson, despite his strong nerve, was for the moment unable to answer, and the man continued:

"I only guess—but yet I guess, that the lady just parted with has spoken to you of me. I do not know you—but again I guess; her business with me is left to you. Am I right? Will you deal with me?"

The barrister had recovered his composure. He eyed the fellow steadily under the gaslight from top to toe, and then said coolly: "Yes, if you can give some proof that you are he."

"Sir," was the reply, "the lady was

Lady Vandellan; once her name was Mayne; once she eloped with me; I am now poor, she is rich. I want money. I track her now wherever she goes, even to Rome to-morrow, until she pays me. If you are to pay me you can—now, and I disappear till I want more money, when I come to her again, or to you, as you please—is this proof?"

Swainson felt that it was; he saw that it was not a time to stick at trifles, and he decided how to act. "Walk in," he said, "give me ten minutes, and we will see if we can do business together."

He showed the man into his sitting-room, which was on the ground-floor, and instantly turning the key upon him, rushed out of the house and across Piccadilly to the police-station in Vine Street.

Giving his card to the inspector on duty, he explained that he might want the assistance of a constable on a delicate matter he had in hand, and begged that one might be immediately sent to take up his stand at the door of No. — in Duke Street, there to wait further orders. As an earnest of his good faith, he paid then and there the usual fee for such service, and a man was instantly told off for it. In less than ten minutes Swainson had unlocked the door of his room, and was again face to face with his strange visitor. The man rose as he said:

"You have taken great precaution, sir, but why should I run away? it is not for me to run."

"Never mind that," said the barrister; "now to business. Sit down; you guess rightly in supposing that I know the state of affairs between you and Lady Vandellan, so we will not beat about the bush. You have letters of hers—fourteen in number. Name your price for them."

The man involuntarily grasped at the outside of his breast-pocket, and Swainson knew that he had the letters with him there.

"I do not sell those," he said a little nervously, for he was evidently not prepared for the rapid way in which the barrister had come to the point.

"Then, in that case, do you know," went on the latter firmly, "what I am going to do?"

"Oh, you can do nothing that I care for."

"You are mistaken; if you are not reasonable, and refuse to sell the letters—you shall have a good price for them—I shall give you into custody for being in

possession of property that does not belong to you. I have a policeman outside there, ready to take you. Look, you may see him standing against the area railings now," and he drew back the curtain of the window. Caldini glanced through the opening, and saw the constable, but he shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Oh, it is nonsense that; the letters are my property, I can prove they are addressed to me."

"Very likely," said Swainson; "that does not matter for my purpose. You refuse to sell the letters; I call in the policeman and give you into custody; you are taken to the station and searched. The letters are found on you. I claim them on behalf of the lady who wrote them. It will take you some time to prove your identity before a magistrate, and that they are really yours. In the meanwhile, I get possession of them and destroy them. You may, if you carry matters to extremity, charge me with false imprisonment and all the rest of it, but it will be difficult and cost money, and take a long time. Perhaps you punish me in the end; I take my punishment. Perhaps that may be a satisfaction to you, but, meanwhile, the letters no longer exist; you have no proofs that Lady Vandellan ever saw you in her life, and if you attempt to annoy her, the law will protect her. Now," went on Swainson slowly, "Signor Caldini, do you realise that picture sufficiently to contrast it with another which I will paint for you? I say to you, name your price for the letters; you hand them to me; and you go away from this house a rich man. You have no wish to harm a woman you once were fond of; you only want money. I offer it to you. Now, how much?"

The foreigner had keenly followed all that had been uttered, and appeared to be revolving it in his mind. Presently he said:

"Ah, but this is nonsense. Your law will not allow that you yourself take the things from my pocket—your police take them, perhaps, but they are returned to me."

"Yes," said Swainson, "but not before I have examined them to see if they are what I shall state them to be, and when I once have them in my hands I pop them in a moment into the fire, and then, where are you? I shall be punished, perhaps, but the lady will be safe, and that is all I care for! Do you see?"

Signor Caldini showed signs that he did

see, for after a little more consideration he went on:

"Well, give me five hundred pounds in good money down at this moment, and you shall have the letters."

"Let me see them," said Swainson.

"Ah no!" responded the other, "not till I see the money. You may destroy them even here, as you threaten."

"No, you could prevent that; you are stronger than I am; the fire is out, too," said Swainson, pointing to the grate; "the gas-light above there is out of my reach. See, now, I will place the money on this side of the table by you, you shall count it. Then you shall put the letters on my side of the table—mind! all, every one! Come now, be wise!"

And he began counting the notes as he took them from the packet Lady Vandellan had recently given him, and laid them one by one within reach of his visitor.

The sight of the ready money was too much for the Italian. He made a feeble show of hesitation, but presently drew from his breast-pocket a packet of letters, time-worn and dirty for the most part, and held together by an old elastic band.

"That is all, on my faith, all fourteen," he added, putting them on the table by Swainson's side, and he turned his pocket inside out.

Swainson, having counted and examined the letters sufficiently to convince himself that they were what he wanted, at length said:

"Right!"

Then he took a large blue envelope from the writing-case on the table, put them in it, fastened it down, and dipping a pen in some ink, hastened to direct it.

Whilst Caldini was gathering up the notes and putting them in his pocket, he eyed the bulky blue envelope longingly, as if regretting now having parted with its contents. For a moment he seemed inclined to seize it; his brow darkened ominously, and he made a movement with his hand towards the packet.

"Ah! ah!" cried Swainson, suddenly observing the action and rising quickly, "you forget the policeman outside, do you? Shall I call him in to see you safely off the premises?"

"Oh, you mistake me," said the Italian with a sardonic smile and bow. "I wish you good-night."

"It is the best thing you can do," said Swainson, opening the door, and the next instant the man was in the street. As the

barrister let him out, and watched him disappear into the darkness, he beckoned to the constable, and after dismissing him, closed the door and returned to his room. For a while he stood irresolute; presently he looked at his watch, put on his hat, and going forth into the night, bent his steps to the Wits' Club.

"Ah, Smith!" he exclaimed to a gentleman at that moment just emerging into the well-lighted portico, "you are the very man I wanted to see—I am so glad I have caught you again. I think there is a little commission you can execute in Rome for me after all; see," and then he took the blue envelope from his pocket, and after standing in earnest conversation with him for several minutes, he handed him the packet, which the other put in his pocket, and with a few more words the two shook hands and parted at the street corner.

CHAPTER IV.

It was about eight days after the events just recorded that Swainson received the letter from Rome, dated the 11th of April, with which this chronicle opens. It confirmed, as we have seen, only too surely his suspicions concerning Caldini's intention if possible to regain possession of the letters at all costs.

Answering it by return of post, he awaited with the keenest anxiety the next communication from his friend.

This arrived towards the end of the month, and on the eve of Swainson's departure for India. Thus it ran:

"I am not surprised to find that my suspicions were correct. Any doubt that might have lingered would have been cleared up by subsequent events here, even without your letter of confirmation, and I should have written anyway to-day to tell you of the tremendous affair which happened only last evening—the tragic sequel to my adventure in the railway-carriage.

"The window of my room, which is high up, looks into one of those Roman court-yards which, as I dare say you know, generally present an amusing scene, with their ledges and roofs occupied by all sorts of live-stock: cats, dogs, monkeys, parrots, flowers and greenery, and the various evidences of the crowded life gathered together on the different floors. I was sitting last night without my coat, just before dusk, watching the antics of two monkeys in a neighbouring balcony, and it occurred to me that if one of them should get loose from his chain what a game he

might have, and how very easily he might enter any of the rooms. Indeed, I thought that an agile man might do the same by clambering up or dropping from level to level, by aid of the pipes and irregular projections and the network of wires by which the water is brought up from the wells in sliding copper bowls. Perhaps my mind had been running on thieves—anyhow, I was struck for the first time with the insecurity of one's belongings, and having received your letter but a few hours before, I walked to my trunk in the corner, unlocked it, and looked at your fatal blue envelope just to reassure myself that it was safe. Then I began rummaging among shirts and collars for something I remembered I wanted, could not find it, and finally, tired of stooping over the trunk, gave up the search, lighted a pipe, and flung myself on my bed.

"The evening was very warm; everybody's windows were wide open. I had had a hard day's work, and I suppose I began to doze. Suddenly I was aroused by a slight sound. There was only just enough light left in the sky to show me where the window was, but, what was more important, there was quite enough to show me that there was a man apparently getting into my room by the open casement from the narrow balcony. For a moment I thought I was dreaming, for his figure, telling dark against the sky, looked like that of the spurious contadino, otherwise your friend Caldini. I sprang up, and he, having calculated, no doubt, from the quiet and darkness that the room was empty, was so startled that I saw him step back, clutch at something, slip, stagger, topple over, and suddenly disappear. There was a wild cry of despair, followed by a heavy thud and a shriek. It was all so momentary and horrifying that I don't pretend to describe accurately any succeeding details. The main fact with which you are concerned is that the poor wretch was picked up in the court below quite dead and sadly mutilated, and that he has been recognised as one Giovanni Caldini, an erewhile singer and actor, who, having lost his voice, has lately been employed in the service of the Papal Secret Police. This latter circumstance may account for his having got clear of the difficulty I put him in at Chiusi. I can't say, and I have had no time yet to make enquiries as to how he could have tracked me or have known I still hold possession of the letters, or how he actually reached my balcony. The

supposition is that he must have gained admission to an adjoining room, and then have crept catlike to my balcony.

"This, however, is of little importance to you or me now—you will be content to know that the letters are beyond his reach, though it seems a horrible way to have secured their safety. Still he paid the cost himself, and through no one's fault but his own. I have just found out that Lady V. has arrived in Rome; directly I have executed your commission you shall hear again."

A few days later Swainson received a grateful letter from the lady herself, acknowledging the receipt of the compromising packet.

He sailed for India within forty-eight hours, calming his conscience for the share he had had in this his strangest experience, professional and otherwise, of men and manners, by the recollection that it had preserved his old friend's domestic happiness. The assurances that this remains intact which he receives from Malvern from time to time, are quite sufficient, he considers, to justify his having helped Lady Vandellan to keep her dangerous secret.

JACK'S SWEETHEART.

By MRS. LEITH ADAMS.

DOLLY, the shipwright's only child, had been the pet and pride of Sandybeach village ever since she could run alone. Perhaps the death of her young mother when Dolly was born, surrounded the little one from the first with a halo of sympathy. Every one was so sorry for honest David Deacon, left with the care of a motherless babe! Some of the women (maids or widows these) felt so keenly for his situation that they would gladly have undertaken the post of stepmother to the big-eyed solemn-looking child who seemed such an unsuitable responsibility for a lone man. All the place respected David Deacon, but his fingers were as rough as nutmeg-graters with hard work in the ship-yard, and his ways and manners were hearty enough to his mates, but too loud and outspoken to render him a suitable companion for an infant.

However, as time passed on, the attentions of these well-meaning females slackened—that is, towards the shipwright, not towards Baby Dolly. For David managed

to get along "somehow," and if he would not see that he might get on better, what could any one do with a man obstinately blind? Yet the disappointed aspiring ones continued to adore Dolly.

Imagine her—with the sweetest wee face ever seen clipt close round by a little scarlet hood, that again surmounting a scarlet cloak, a purple skirt, and two bits of boots; imagine her—sitting on her father's doorstep, laughing at the marigolds that stood all a-row in the sunshine, and nursing a kitten white as milk in her plump little arms: then say if it was to be wondered at that every man and woman in Sandybeach was proud of Dolly?

Jack Holdfast, David Deacon's apprentice, and likely enough some day to be his partner, was a tall, blue-eyed, curly-headed chap, broad-shouldered and sturdy, when Dolly was a wee lisping lass of three summers; and the child took possession of him, and tyrannised over him as only a child can, ruling him with the dainty dual-sceptre of her brightness and her sweetness as with a rod of iron.

At Sandybeach the shore was low and the tide ran out far. What fun to be carried (in Jack's arms) across the dark stretches of slippery seaweed down to the silvery line of ripples that came creeping slowly yet surely over the golden sand, and there watch the little crabs, left by the last tide, scurrying to reach the water that meant new life, and hope, and freedom! How delicious to be carried (always in Jack's arms) up the crazy zigzag stairway in the ship-yard that led up the scaffolding, gathered like a network around some ship about to be launched on the shining waters, and from the giddy elevation peep down at father, looking ever so small below!

But all these things happened a long while ago now, for Dolly, the shipwright's daughter, is now a blooming maiden of "sweet seventeen," the pride and the beauty of Sandybeach.

Dolly has the softest, most bewitching eyes in the world—deep-grey, with curling black lashes. Her mouth is a rosebud; her locks ripple, and each ripple is touched with sunlight; and her form is lithe and slender, yet full of health and activity, for Dolly is no laggard, and her pretty sun-browned hands are seldom idle.

David used to say his lass was "brisk as a bee," and watch her through the mist that rose from the bowl of his churchwarden, with no little pride in his handsome eyes. Though Dolly was said

to "favour" her mother, she got those clear grey eyes of hers from the shipwright; nor did a certain half-saucy, half-tender coquetry that lurked in their clear depths take from their power of charming. Quite the reverse, indeed, as honest Jack Holdfast had found to his cost already!

The shipwright's long sloping garden, which ran down to the shore and was so mixed up with it at the lower end that marigolds and heartsease sometimes lifted their heads from the sand, while shells and long dark trails of algae were not unknown among the bushes of currant and lavender, was holy ground to Jack.

Its straggling wall was in places topped with gilly-flowers, that swayed in the wind and grew bravely in a scanty soil; and Jack dearly loved the luscious scent of their red-brown blossoms; for—standing near them (so near that Dolly had plucked a spray and set it in her breast)—an old, old story had been told "in the gloaming," and Jack's lips had tasted a kiss from his sweetheart's rosy mouth.

There was a ring of tenderness and truth in Jack's character that raised him above his fellows, and made him—to all intents and purposes—in spite of his toil-hardened hands and homely garb—the truest of true gentlemen. "God bless thee, lass, and make me worthy of thee!" he said to Dolly as he left her that night; while the girl was ready to wish her lover were less solemn in look and speech, since it made the tears rise, and her heart swell to a sigh.

Dolly had been reading a charming story-book in which the lover called his mistress first a "queen" and then an "angel." There was no chance worth mentioning of Jack calling her a "queen;" and there was some reason to suppose he would hardly have thought it right to call her an "angel."

It will therefore be seen that Dolly's rose-leaf was not without a crumple; and that though a sweet, all womanly joy in her betrothal nestled deep down in her heart, a little sense of disappointment on certain points—a lack of sentiment and romance in the whole affair—made itself felt.

Even the shipwright himself assisted to develope this dissatisfied feeling on Dolly's part, for what did he say by way of comment on the state of affairs between her and Jack? Did he say that Jack had won a "pearl" or a "rosebud"? Did he speak as if Dolly had conferred a priceless

gift upon her young knight, by plighting her troth to him, all among the gilly-flowers? Not he!

He just patted her on the back, touched her curly locks with his kind rough hand, and said: "You're a lucky lass, Dolly, and it 'ull be your own fault if you're not a happy one."

Dearly as she loved him, Dolly was just a bit afraid of her father, so she said nothing at the time; but, once in her own room, she pouted and flouted, and tossed her pretty head, and felt altogether a good deal ill-used; though under all, the happiness was singing in her heart like a lark at sunrise.

Sandybeach did not excite itself particularly over the betrothal of Jack Holdfast and the shipwright's daughter, because it was just what everyone had been expecting. The women smiled to each other, and said, "What a bonnie bride the child would make!" and the men rallied Jack, and told him he was "in luck's way," an assertion he never contradicted, since he believed himself to be the very luckiest man that ever stood in shoe-leather.

True, he and Dolly must wait a while; for she was "but a lassie yet;" and he wasn't out of his apprenticeship. But time would soon slip by, bringing with it the desired haven of a little home all his own, a cage wherein to put his pretty bright-eyed bird.

Jack sang over his work, and whistled over his work, and was just the jolliest-hearted fellow in Sandybeach or out of it; and "walked out" of an evening with Dolly by his side, Dolly very happy, and just a little shamefaced when she met a neighbour, and sometimes thinking thoughts that would have sorely puzzled Jack had he known them.

It was very nice, of course, to be walking along with her stalwart lover by her side—but it must be nicer still to wear a long trailing gown and hear it rustle on the crisp green grass.

It was delightful to meet Jack's loving smile, and happy nod of greeting, as he came up the garden from the ship-yard, but—oh, how infinitely more delightful would it have been to be a lady, and see your lover greet you with doffed hat and head bared in your honour!

Fortunately, Sandybeach knew nothing of these petty troubles that marred Dolly's full content; while as to David Deacon, he would most probably have been ready to

box Dolly's pretty little ears if he had got an inkling of them! But, indeed, the shipwright had enough to do just now with his own affairs, and was himself the theme and centre of interest and gossip throughout the village.

For was it not said that he had taken to "walking out" with Jael Duncce?

Jael Duncce! Such a name for a woman to be burdened with through life! The wife of Heber the Kenite is not such an endearing character that parents need go calling their children after her. But old Farmer Duncce was always known to have a craze for Scripture names.

Jael was a straight-up-and-down kind of woman, with hard, yet not uncomely features, and grey-lined hair twisted into a small unyielding knob at the back of her head and transfixed by a monster hairpin.

Jael had devoted a long life to her cross-grained old father, nursing him through a trying illness which had lasted for several years; and, now that he was laid to rest in the churchyard on the hill, maybe David Deacon appeared to her as a sort of sun, ordained to shine upon her life in its eventide. At all events, she walked beside him of a Sunday afternoon before all beholders, with a certain defiant pride; stuck a new puce bow a-top of her bonnet, and new puce strings to tie in a neat twist beneath her chin—all little facts that had a certain pathos of their own, had there been anyone in Sandybeach to look upon them in that light.

It may be said at once that David displayed sound judgment in taking to himself Jael Duncce, and converting her into Jael Deacon; which he did with the promptness and energy that characterised most of his actions in life. Also, that Sandybeach generally was disappointed in its prognostications as to Dolly and her stepmother "getting on badly."

Not a matron in the village but was prepared to make a victim of pretty Dolly, and pet and console the little beauty under the trying circumstances in which she found herself placed.

But Dolly only laughed at all their hints and innuendoes; and said that Jael was a "dear old thing," who made such cakes and puddings as were past all belief.

Jack was one great radiant smile at the wedding, which he looked upon as a prelude to his own, and the shipwright looked as if he didn't care a straw what anybody said so long as he was sure of pleasing himself—that being his state of mind to a turn.

As to Jael—for years her old father had done nothing but find fault with her, and when she found her husband and Dolly so pleased with everything she did, tears of happiness would rise to her eyes, and she had to knit ever so many stitches by guess-work (all awry too) before she could blink them away.

There are people in the world who have the hardest shells and the softest kernels conceivable; who look as if they were carved in wood, and yet whose hearts are as soft as butter. Of these Jael was one.

A great love sprang up between the two women, and it was touching to see the interest Jael took in Jack and Jack's sweetheart. The romance of it all was something her own young days had never known; nevertheless, it was beautiful exceedingly in her eyes.

Dolly said that it was ever so much happier at home "now father had got married." Jael's brothers, Aminadab and Zerubbabel, said "Sister was old enough surely to know her own mind" (of which there could be no doubt). Altogether, it may be fairly said that David Deacon's choice was at last justified in the eyes of all men, and all women too—a far more difficult matter.

"I sha'n't feel as father will be lonesome now, when I'm gone," said Dolly to Jack.

"That's true," replied her lover; "and, Dolly—things bein' so blessed and comfortable, don't you think you could come to me a bit sooner—eh, lass?"

They were sitting beside each other on the beach under the shadow of a boat that lay high and dry.

Jack's arm had stolen round the girl's slim waist, and she felt his breath warm against her cheek. She loved him dearly—dearly! It made her happy to feel him so near, and know he was all her own, and yet—

The spirit of coquetry was in Dolly's nature. She was living a dual life. In one she was Jack's dear little sweetheart, loving and loved, looking forward to the day when they two should have a dear little home, a home from whose cosy, curtained window she should peep out slyly, as evening came and the day's work was done, to see if her "lad" was coming; meet him at the door with a kiss on her lips; and be sure that the kettle was well on the boil, so that the tea might be made as good tea should.

This was one life, happy, healthy, simple, true.

The other was quite a different affair. In that Dolly was the heroine of one of those romantic stories she loved; she had a lover at her feet, who sighed perpetually and called her the most delightful names, thinking himself in Paradise if she gave him her finger-tips to kiss.

Hence it came about that Dolly gave herself airs that evening under the shadow of the boat; turned away her head, and said she "wasn't sure" and she "didn't care," and told several other untruths. Finally, she sent Jack home with a downcast look upon his honest face, and a sad look in his bonnie blue eyes, the thought of which, afterwards, almost made her cry.

It was only a lovers' quarrel, and they made it up shortly. Indeed, there was not much choice in the matter, for coquetry and affectation are very apt to die at the prospect of a parting (when there is any real love to go upon); and it came about that Jack Holdfast had to go to Ostend upon important business for the shipwright. A journey to Ostend appeared to be a serious matter in the eyes of Sandybeach. It was a vast undertaking—going to a foreign country to learn new tricks in an old trade—but it was an honourable thing, and no doubt would "advantage" the lad in the end. So—a sort of accredited agent for the firm in which he was one day to be enrolled partner—Jack went.

The most comforting remembrance he carried away with him was the thought of the tears in Dolly's bright eyes as she bade him farewell, and the glowing thought that David Deacon had said the wedding should be hastened if the mission was well carried out. The last glimpse Jack got of Sandybeach was the old square tower of the church on the hill, and he thought to himself how gay its bells would sound ringing out over the sea the day that he married his bonnie love.

Dolly cried herself to sleep the night Jack went away. In the morning the tip of her little nose was pink, and her eyes showed each a rim to match; but she had plenty to do by-and-by, for Jael managed to get a nasty fall, and sprained her ankle so that the doctor said it was "worse than a clean fracture to deal with." Jael lay very still in grievous pain, patient beyond what any other woman would have been, because her past life had been one long lesson of patience; and touched into the tenderest gratitude by David's anxiety about her, and Dolly's gentle tendance of her.

Jael would draw Dolly's bonnie face to hers of an evening and kiss it, with a strange, almost shamefaced tenderness, and then bid the girl go and get a breath of fresh air. For the evenings were long and light now, and the summer sea came creeping up the sands, glistening with the reflected radiance of the bright canopy overhead.

Then a strange and wonderful thing happened to Dolly.

About a mile from the village was an ancient and deserted manor-house, crumbling to decay. Some blight was over it, people said—a Chancery suit or some such mildew. But no blight was on its lovely old garden, where summer's hand had made all things fair, and the unchecked luxuriance of the trees and flowers had made, in many successive years, a sort of natural tangled wilderness. Here, too, was a strange deep pond, like a large well that had overflowed its bed, in which was a spring of water, ever bubbling up, and gently swaying the white lilies and their broad, green, boat-like leaves that floated on its breast, as though some water-nymph's hand stirred them from beneath.

Dolly loved this wild, deserted garden, and, one golden evening, when the lilies in the pond seemed golden flowers upon a golden sea, having wandered there, saw fit to covet one of the great closed buds, that floated just beyond her reach.

She managed to catch a leaf that lay near it, and thought to sway the two together; but the round slimy stem came out of its bed, while the obstinate bud never moved.

"Let me get it for you!" said a voice behind her; and Dolly, wonderfully sweet and pretty in the mellow fading light, started, and turned—to see one of the heroes out of her story-books.

There could be no doubt about it, for he possessed every qualification most characteristic of those mirrors of chivalry. He was tall and slim, and beautifully attired in evening dress, with a light overcoat flung over his black attire, and a flower—such a flower!—in his button-hole. He had a weak, but attractive face, rather curly fair hair, and the most angelic smile—so Dolly thought—that she had ever seen.

Besides, he took his hat off as she turned; he stood bareheaded before her, as he asked her permission to capture the wilful lily-bud.

"This is the sort of man, then," thought Dolly, watching him wide-eyed, "who would

call one a queen, and an angel." She had seen specimens of the genus in the squire's pew, and in the vicar's pew at church; at the cattle-show, and riding by with the Ladies Bellraven from the Hall. But she had never seen one so near as this, and, assuredly, none had ever given her such courtly greeting.

The lily bud was plucked, and Dolly carried it in her hand, feeling not unlike a queen bearing a sceptre.

"Do you often walk in this quaint old garden?" said the stranger presently.

"Yes," said Dolly. Then she grew rosy red as she added, "I am Dolly Deacon, the shipwright's daughter."

"And I am Arthur Cunningham, at your service," replied the knight of the lily. "I am staying at Ferndale."

"With Mrs. Nesbit?" said Dolly impulsively. "Is she——?" Then she stopped short, twirling the poor lily on its stem.

"Is she a nice person to stay with?" said Arthur Cunningham, completing the sentence for her and stroking his long fair moustache to hide a lurking smile at Dolly's unconventional simplicity. "No, not at all; quite the reverse."

"What do you stop there for, then?" asked Dolly, wondering.

"Well, you see—she is my aunt!"

Could anything be prettier, thought Mr. Cunningham, than the fair picture of confusion this rustic beauty made at this confession?

The truth was, Mrs. Nesbit did not bear a pleasant reputation in Sandybeach. She was a woman who considered herself ill-used by fate, and wished to take it out of everybody in consequence. Her husband had been a drunkard. He had wasted as much of her substance as he could, and only left the residue untouched because he had died before he could make away with it. Her only son had so conducted himself that she was constrained to feel no sorrow when he too died. Why then should she help to make the world pleasant to other people? She didn't make it pleasant. She made it as unpleasant as she could. She could not be a very agreeable person to stay with.

"Being my aunt—my mother's own sister," said Arthur Cunningham, "I am obliged to come and stay with her sometimes."

He coloured slightly as he spoke, for he was conscious of deeper and more selfish reasons for paying a certain amount of attention to "Aunt Nesbit."

He was her heir, and had "expectations." His sisters often said to him (he had been somewhat idle, and had hung fire in the battle of life): "Arthur, it is your solemn duty to keep in with Aunt Nesbit—it is your duty to us."

"It is very dull and stupid up there, as you may suppose," continued the knight of the lily, looking admiringly into Dolly's eyes; "but I sha'n't mind it—now."

"Now!" That meant since he had met her, thought Dolly.

As she walked pensively home, she felt a good deal taller than she had ever done in her life. As she went up the steep matter-of-fact stairs at home, she almost heard the frou-frou of a trailing silken robe behind her. Neither did she fail to call to mind that Mr. Cunningham had asked her if she "often" walked in the deserted garden of an evening.

Next time Jael begged her to go for a "bit of an outing" Dolly felt herself blush so hotly that she was glad to stand by the window and make believe to be watching a little fishing-smack come in, with red sails set and white prow lazily cutting the water. She was glad to turn away from the sight of that pale, patient face lying back in uncomplaining pain upon the pillow, the grey hair falling back from the square features, the thin lips set in a line of resolute endurance.

But for all this secret compunction, Dolly met Mr. Cunningham again and yet again. She had often read a romance; now she was living one. Not in the truest sense, though. Not a throb of tenderness ever stirred her heart for the knight of the lily; only her vanity was gratified. She told Arthur Cunningham many things. All about the books she read, and the thoughts she thought, and he drew her out and led her on, and was mightily amused, finding the wearisome monotony of "staying with Aunt Nesbit" charmingly diversified.

"I have quite taken to rusticity," he wrote to his eldest sister Julia.

"I only hope it isn't rusticity in a petticoat," remarked that sapient young person, knowing her brother's flirting capabilities.

The young man repeatedly said to himself that he "meant the girl no harm," in which he certainly spoke the truth. But unconsciously he was doing poor Dolly most cruel wrong. Sandybeach had been proud of Dolly; but now nasty whispers here and there, like little serpents, began to raise their heads and hiss, and one of

the workmen in the yard was heard to say it "was time Jack wur whoam."

At last, one summer night, Arthur Cunningham, moved thereto by the hush of the flower-scented gloaming, by the exceeding fairness of poor Dolly in the pallid amber light, by the nearness of a pretty woman who seemed ready enough to be worshipped, suddenly put his arm round the village beauty, drew her to his side, and kissed her dainty cheek. An instant more, and he was conscious of the extreme folly of which he had been guilty.

"Oh, Mr. Cunningham!" cried Dolly, who had paled, not flushed beneath that sudden caress; "why did you do that? I never, never thought you would do such a thing!"

Arthur Cunningham wore an eye-glass hanging to the slenderest of chains. He took it up, screwed it into his eye, and then—from the critical wonder of that look Dolly fled.

Her airy castle had tumbled about her ears; the pretty bubble which had shone with such fair prismatic hues in the sunshine of her fancy, had burst.

Hotly glowed the cheek that Arthur Cunningham's lips had touched. Once safe in her own little chamber, she washed her face and scrubbed it, as though she thought to wipe the stain of that kiss away. How dare he kiss "Jack's Sweetheart!" Above all, how dare he do so without "with your leave" or "if you please;" and just as if he had a right to do it!

To have been wooed (in vain) in that sweet old garden; perhaps to have seen Mr. Cunningham on his knees on the moss-grown pathway; maybe to have let him kiss her hand in a fond farewell salute; all this would have been delicious—but for things to end like this!

Every woman, when things go wrong with her, longs to go to another woman for comfort.

So Dolly stole into Jael's room, knelt down by the bed, and just burst out crying.

"Dear child, tell me what's ado?" said Jael, gently touching the bowed head with her hard hand, and letting it rest there. "Never mind though, perhaps you'd as lief not tell an old woman like me; but I know, lass, it's wearyin' you are for Jack; the time seems long—longer than you thought it would. Patience, child, patience——" But Dolly, trembling in every limb, rose to her feet,

kissed Jael in a hurried, flustered kind of way, and was gone like a shadow.

Half an hour later, when she went creeping downstairs to see if the girl was duly setting forth David Deacon's supper, she became conscious of a stir in the cosy parlour.

A neighbour was there, smoking the pipe of peace; and the shipwright, his jolly face one broad smile of content, told his lass he had a bit of news for her.

Jack had come home.

"Thee'st ta'en away her breath, shipwright," said the visitor, chuckling; for Dolly was panting like a hunted hare.

"I'll go and meet him at the bottom of the garden," said the girl, paling more and more.

"Sweethearts like to have their meetin's and their partin's to themselves," said the neighbour, who was a bit of an oracle in the way of truisms.

So Dolly went.

How warm was the summer's night—how still! It seemed to be listening to the soft lap-lap of the incoming tide. Dolly took her stand under a mighty thorn-bush that was blown all one way by the buffetings of the sea wind. Great heavy night-moths came blundering along, booming and buzzing as they flew. From far away over the wide spreading sandbanks came the plaintive cry of the curlew, and the "weep-weep-weep," of the sandpiper.

Dolly's heart beat heavily within her breast; her breath came quick and fast. Was not that the crush of a firm tread on the shingle? Jack's sweetheart knew that her lover was near; and yet she was not glad! "Perfect love casteth out fear," but Dolly's love, real and true as it was, had not been perfect; it had been full of flaws; and now fear overshadowed Love, until the little god was well-nigh smothered.

"Jack, is it you, dear?" said a small trembling voice; and a small trembling figure stepped out of the shadow of the thorn-bush to stand right in Jack's pathway. Another moment and the girl would have nestled in her lover's arms, laid her soft cheek to his, and told him all the story, keeping nothing back, not even the kiss that she had tried to wash off.

But no loving arms were held out to Dolly; no lips sought hers in the long sweet kiss of happy meeting after weary days of absence. Jack gripped her firmly by her two slender wrists, and drew her

on to where the shimmer of the star-shine, and the gleam of a crescent moon that hung like a silver bow above the old church-tower, fell full upon her lovely quivering face.

"Let me look at thee!" he said, hissing the words fiercely between his teeth; "let me be sure as it's thee and none other—Jack's sweetheart—her as has broke his heart and marred his life!"

"Jack—Jack," moaned Dolly, "let me go, you hurt me!"

"Let thee go?" he answered in a passion of scorn; "no, I wunnot let thee go! Hurt thee? what is thy hurt to mine? Mine's in the heart, lass—in the heart!" But he loosed his hold upon her even as he spoke, falling back into the shadow of the old thorn-tree and leaning against its gnarled and twisted stem.

"I come whoam," he said, folding his arms, and drawing his breath deeply in between each sentence, "full o' loving thoughts of thee. Thy pretty face has been before me night and day while I've been away, and if I've done well, I've been glad for thy sake, thinking the master would give thee to me a bit sooner, and let the bells ring for me and for thee before the summer should be past. Ay, ay, it's well for thee to hang thy pretty head i' shame before me, through it nigh breaks my heart to see thee so. I'd rather," continued Jack, clenching his strong brown hand, and pushing back the cap from his damp brow as if its weight oppressed him, "I'd rather have seen thee dead, with thy white face floatin' among the lilies on the pool i' the old garden, than be told of thy meetin's there wi' one as can bring thee no good, and means thee no good. I'd rather someone had met me and tould me as God had taken my little sweetheart from me, and shown me her grave up there on the hill, than heard her called a light-o'-love, and one as isn't fit to sit by honest Jael's hearthstone, or call an honest man husband—"

Dolly was shaking from head to foot, cowering away as though Jack's words were blows and hurt her sorely; but at last their bitterness stung her into a sort of feverish strength and courage.

She went up to his side; she peered into his face in the dim uncertain light. For a while she was silent.

From the distant sandbanks came the cry of the curlew like the cry of a broken heart. Up from the beach came the low measured moan of the sea, rising and falling in tiny wavelets against the shingle.

And these two—Jack and his sweetheart—looked into each other's faces with haggard eyes, heart-brokenly.

At length Dolly found her voice—or perhaps someone else's, for it didn't sound like hers.

"Whoever told you these things, Jack," she said, "they are lies—lies—lies! I have been foolish, very, very foolish, but, oh, my dear—my heart has never wandered from your keeping! I came down here to meet you—I came to tell you all about it. I grew strong to tell you—keeping nothing back—as I knelt by Jael's side and kissed her patient face. She is so true herself, that to be near her makes one feel it easy to be true oneself, no matter what the truth may cost. I will go back to her; she will not be hard upon me; she will pity me, though I have been so wrong and foolish; and, Jack—"

Here Dolly stopped a moment, and a sob cut her words in twain.

She could not see her lover's face, for it was bowed upon his hands; but she could hear the sighs that rent his breast. She fancied, too, that she could hear the throbbing of his heart; but that might have been the heavy beating of her own.

"Good-bye, Jack; I cannot be your sweetheart any more. Since such evil things are said of me—since men have called me a 'light-o'-love'—I am not fit to be that. But say one kind word to me before I go back to Jael, who will not thrust me from her, no matter what the people say. Do not let me have to remember that your last word was one of anger."

Having thus spoken, Dolly waited.

For what?

In truth she scarce knew.

Up at the end of the long garden she could see the lights of home; she could even hear the sounds of voices—those of her father, and the neighbour who was taking his leave for the night.

How little the shipwright thought, as he made sly jokes anent lovers' lingering ways, that there, under the shadow of the thorn-tree, Dolly's heart was breaking amid the sweet and tender sounds of a midsummer night by the sea!

How long did Dolly wait, wondering if Jack would look up—wondering if Jack would speak?

She could not tell. Time does not count by moments in such an hour as that, but by feelings.

But the dear true eyes—the bonnie blue eyes that many a maid in the village

would have been glad to see herself shining in—met Dolly's at last.

And they were drowned in tears. No woman's could be wetter than were those of stalwart Jack Holdfast as he looked at his troubled sweetheart.

The sight of her lover's tears is Dolly's undoing.

Like one who, playing with a sharp weapon, wounds a friend cruelly, the girl gives one amazed, incredulous look at the ruin she has wrought, utters a little strangled cry that has as much heartbreak in it as the far-off plaint of the curlew, and hastens towards the ruddy light of home, that seems to her in that moment as a beacon to a sailor tossing amid the billows of some strange and boisterous sea.

But as she reaches the door Dolly halts a moment, one little foot poised on the white stone step.

Every breath she draws is a sob. Every heart-beat like the dull thud of a hammer.

Is Jack coming to denounce his false and foolish sweetheart to the honest shipwright who calls her daughter? Must David Deacon, that straight-living man, whose way through life has known no devious twisting, no shady corners, be told that Dolly—his little Dolly—is spoken of as a "light-o'-love?"

No; what Jack had to say has been said to Dolly, and to no other. His heart, broken as it is, is loyal to the girl whose lips have touched his, whose hand has nestled in his own. He feels as if his tongue would blister in the utterance of a hard word to man or woman, of her whom he has looked upon as his wife to be. He has listened in dumb but cruel pain to the story of those meetings with Arthur Cunningham in the deserted garden. He has known the thrill of hatred and bitter anger that turns even a good man into a murderer at heart. He has felt the passion of sorrow which the loss of the "one ewe lamb" must ever call into being; and, although Dolly can never be his wife, Jack is beating his brains hard to shield her from the consequences of her own folly, to save her from the deeper snares still that the would-be seducer may wind about her unwary feet.

It will be seen that Jack has judged Arthur Cunningham unfairly; but then hot anger is seldom just.

Dolly heard the firm manly step crushing the shingle: heard its echo die away along the shore. Jack was gone: and oh, how still and empty the night seemed to grow

as the sound of his footfall died out of it!

"Heyday!" said the shipwright, almost tumbling against Dolly as he came out, intending to have a word with Jack; "whatever's come of thy lad? Hast thee been fallin' out wi' him, Dolly?"

This last suggestion was all the harder to bear because it took the form of a jest—jocular from the extremeness of its improbability. David Deacon tipped his little wench under the chin as he made it; and how welcome was the grey-blue veil of the dusk to that scared white face, in whose every line was written the story of a bitter grief!

"Jack has gone—home," said Dolly, almost choking over the last word.

For one instant a look of shrewd suspicion crossed David Deacon's face. Then was it chased away by a broad and beaming smile.

Old fool that he was—how was it likely the likes of him should understand the tricks, and ways, and fancies of young lovers? The old forget the whims of youth. His and Jael's had been a common-sense, matter-of-fact courtship, as became their years; happy in its elements of mutual respect and kindness, but lacking in "whimsies," little "tiffs," and sweet reconciliations of claspings and kissings.

Meanwhile, all Dolly's heart was filled with a desperate longing—only to get to Jael, only to feel the loving touch of the hard hand upon her head once more, only to pour the bitter tale of her sorrows into the ear which she knew would never turn away from her.

She watched her father eagerly. Was he going upstairs at once, or would a pinch more tobacco be squeezed into that long churchwarden of his, and sundry grave reflections upon the probable business result of Jack's visit to the Ostend "yard" be indulged in?

Yes, it was all right; David Deacon had taken a seat in his favourite hickory-wood chair by the open window, and the pipe was duly replenished.

Did ever maiden's feet flit so swiftly and so noiselessly up a high and narrow stairway as our Dolly's? Was ever maiden's face whiter or sadder; were ever maiden's eyes more full of fear and pain than hers, as she stole into Jael's room, and flung herself sobbing beside the sick woman's bed?

There let us leave her a while. Sympathy is as the very balm of Gilead to a

wounded heart; and Dolly has found that blessed fount of healing.

The next day was an important one in Jack Holdfast's life. He was the hero of the ship-yard. His manifold adventures in "foreign parts;" his dealings with men who spoke "foreign gibberish," and needed to have "plain, honest English" interpreted for them before they could understand it; his final triumph in the matter respecting which he had gone abroad, and the consequent extension of Deacon and Co.'s trade connection, were subjects of which none could weary. That the magic word "Co." might now be looked upon to represent none other than Jack himself, only added zest to all the rest. A spice of keen, though unhallowed curiosity, also flavoured the whole; for more than one wondered how things stood betwixt the prospective Co. and his master's daughter; and, since Sandybeach had been proud of Dolly, and vowed Dolly was "fit to be a lady," and faces had brightened as she passed, meeting her bonnie smile, this curiosity was dashed with regret.

Even the women (and there is no greater test of a woman's popularity than the fact that her own sex speak evil, or think ill of her, unwillingly) shook their heads sadly, and hoped that things would come right "somehow;" hardly knowing which to pity most, the shipwright, Jack, Jael, or Dolly.

"For she's mothered her wonderful," they said, recognising by that homely phrase the love that had grown up between Dolly and her stepmother.

Jack bore his honours with manly meekness; displayed a magnanimous patience in answering the same question fifty times or so; and worked like half-a-dozen men in one.

"We'll see yo' up at our place to-night—eh, lad?" said the shipwright, as he turned to leave the yard after the day's work.

"Maybe," said Jack; and his master walked home looking thoughtful.

"She's bin floutin' him wi' some o' her pretty tricks," he thought to himself; "but he'll come round—he'll come round—a kiss 'ull do it, never fear. Who'd mind the nonsense of a little rogue like Dolly, the saucy wench!"

Once more the mellow evening light began to pale; once more a tender amethyst crept over sea and sky; and out from the veil of purple haze the curlew cried, and the incoming tide sobbed softly.

Dolly, her face pallid and set, her eyes

bright with resolve to do a deed of daring, speeds over the sandy dunes. Her dress rustles against the star-grass and bows those golden stars, the yellow blossoms of Our Lady's Bedstraw, as she passes. Here and there a little shore-frog scrambles across her pathway, and buries himself among the tufts of sea-pink as fast as his long slender legs will carry him. Up above, a skylark poised in the heart of heaven, pours forth his trilling song—his lovely lay of praise for the long sunny hours of the day that is past. The glad fountain of his joy strikes upon Dolly's ear as a jarring sound, so out of harmony with herself does it seem.

He is so happy, so happy up there, among the fainting colours of the evening sky. While she—

Ah me! how heavily Dolly's heart is beating in her heaving breast! Never has the way seemed so long before.

But at last—she has reached the trysting-place at last. Gate there is none to go through; but a gap in the wall does quite as well.

Now she is past the once hedged-in "ladies' garden." Now the broken quivering sheen of the lily-pond shines out from among arbutus and laurel, whose leaves stir and whisper faintly in the breeze that has risen far out at sea, and stolen inland to kiss the flowers good-night.

There is the heavy scent of syringa in the air; also a more pungent perfume, while something like a monster glow-worm glows among the roses.

It is the end of Arthur Cunningham's cigar; but at sight of Dolly, white and ghostly in the growing shadows, he flings it in among the lilies, where it sputters feebly and goes out.

It would be hard to say what brings Mr. Cunningham here to-night. His last parting from the shipwright's daughter had not been of such a pleasant or alluring nature that he need look longingly to a repetition of it. Perhaps the real truth was that his vanity was wounded, and he wanted to cheat himself into fancying the "rustic daisy" was more startled than angered; was rather struggling against a rising passion for himself than wishing to fly him altogether.

A little smile of triumph curls the lip that is shaded by the heavy sweeping fall of his moustache, as he catches the sound of Dolly's foot-fall, and sees her slight figure coming along the pathway towards the pond.

As for Dolly, she was full of mortal fear; yet full of a desperate courage too.

Several times as she came on her hurried way she had fancied she heard the rustle of a stealthy footstep—a footstep that stopped as she stopped; hastened as she did. We none of us like such sounds, in reality, however much we may say we do not mind them. A certain quickening of the pulses, a sensation of chilliness, even in a hot night, is apt to result. Neither of these signs of trepidation had been wanting in Dolly; but now, she forgot about the mysterious sounds, she forgot everything except that there, before her, stood the man whom she hated with a hatred as hot as was the love with which she loved that other.

All the glamour which had made those stolen meetings by the floating lilies things to be desired was gone. Playing at being a fine lady had proved, in Dolly's case, the deadliest of dead failures. The pretty, painted fruit her eager hand had gathered, had turned to dust and ashes in her mouth.

Not without a certain elation of look and manner, did Arthur Cunningham take a hurried step or two that brought him to her side.

After one look into her face, he took a step backwards by way of variety; and all the lover-like tenderness and eagerness died out of his face.

"Miss—Deacon," he said, showing, it must be confessed, less coolness than might have been looked for in a man of his experience, and stammering over Dolly's name more than was seemly in a man of the world, "I—I—am very glad to see you."

The remark was trite and commonplace, altogether unworthy of one who was pleased to look upon himself as one versed in the ways of women.

"Are you?" said Dolly, her voice clear and distinct, though evidently only both by a supreme effort over herself. "I am not very glad to see you, Mr. Cunningham. I came because—there was no other way."

Amazement held the listener dumb. Dolly's little cottage-bonnet had fallen back from her head. Her cheek was pale, and her lips to match. Her eyes, larger and darker even than their wont, shone like stars, and were fixed upon Arthur Cunningham. They were full of wistful pain; puzzled, too, like those of a child who, having wandered into difficult circumstances, wonders how it got there. Coquetry was dead in them.

"If I had done what was right," continued Dolly, twisting her hands tightly the one in the other, and trying hard to keep her voice from failing or faltering, "I should never have come here at all, only——"

"Only what, little traitress?"

Arthur Cunningham had found his voice now; but on the other hand was fast losing his temper.

"Only it was nice to be made love to by a real gentleman—just for once." Here Dolly grew red with rosy shame, and her head drooped a moment on her breast.

The flush on her own cheek was reflected in that of her companion.

"So, Miss Deacon, we have, it seems, both been acting—I unconsciously."

"I don't quite know what you mean," answered Dolly, looking at him with wild, bewildered eyes; "but if you mean that I have been very wrong and foolish, you are right. That is what I came here to-night to tell you. Jael said it was the best thing to do. Then—she is going to speak up for me to Jack. Perhaps, you know, he may forgive me."

"And who is—er—er—Jack?" asked Mr. Cunningham, not without some suspicion of sheepishness in his general air and demeanour.

"Jack is my sweetheart," said Dolly, feeling proud of the fact, but getting so heart-full in the utterance of it, that tears gathered in her eyes, and her lips quivered so sadly, that it was really a wonder how she could speak at all.

"O—h!" said her companion, an exclamation which only just escaped being a long low whistle, "and this—er—Jack objects to you meeting me by the lily-pond?"

"I can never be his sweetheart any more," wailed Dolly, wringing her hands afresh, and beginning to sob in downright earnest. "Unless he listens to Jael—and forgives me."

"Is this what you came here to-night to tell me, may I ask?" questioned Mrs. Nesbit's nephew with an ugly sneer.

It is all very fine having written home so boastfully about "charming rusticity," but he was wishing most heartily at that moment that he had never set eyes on Miss Dolly.

"No; I came to tell you how wrong and foolish I have been in coming here to meet you. I came to tell you that I would rather walk after Jack barefoot, than ride in a carriage with you! I would! I would! I would!" cried Dolly, stamping

her foot upon the moss-grown pathway, and sobbing between each asseveration. "There is no one like Jack, no one—and I love him true!"

"You should have thought of all these things before, Miss Deacon," said Arthur Cunningham, cool and ironical now, and grasping the position of things firmly.

"Yes, you are right, quite right!" said Dolly, abandoning herself to a fresh impulse of penitence; "you cannot be more angry with me than I am with myself. I have been false and treacherous to the truest heart that ever beat—and all for nothing too!"

This was far from pleasant for Arthur Cunningham, it must be confessed. To say the truth he felt not a little foolish, but determined to show a bold front to the enemy.

"You put things very clearly," he said, making a great show of taking a fresh cigar out of his case, and preparing to light it; "I quite understand."

"I am so glad!" said Dolly, with an April smile breaking through her tears; "so very, very glad! And Jael will be glad too. But stay," she added, as her companion moved away a step or two, evidently anxious to escape from the garden that had proved to him by no means one of Eden. "Stay—there is one thing more. I want you to promise me not to think lightly of me—not as a girl who meant to—to—be unmaidenly, but only as one who was thoughtless and foolish, and forgot in her thoughtlessness and folly that she was—Jack's sweetheart."

The good that lies at the bottom of almost every nature, however weak or bad, was not wanting in Arthur Cunningham.

"Be sure," he said, more earnestly than he could have fancied possible a few moments back; "be sure I shall never think of you with any lack of respect, but always as Jack's sweetheart, and of Jack as a very fortunate fellow."

Dolly hung her head.

"I do not think he is that," she said sadly.

Then some sudden thought seemed to strike her. She looked up at him from under her long lashes like a chidden child, who has promised to be good and wants to fulfil the promise to its utmost limits.

"You must not look to see me here ever again, Mr. Cunningham?"

With hottest ardour he assured her how far from his thoughts was such a possibility.

After all, the situation had its ludicrous aspect, as most things have. Never was lover so eager to get rid of his mistress. Never had Arthur Cunningham hurried to the shelter of Mrs. Nesbit's comfortable abode with such affectionate alacrity.

"Gad! what an ass I've made of myself all round!" he ejaculated, as he flung himself back in a cosy lounge by the library fire; "I'll go up to town by the first train to-morrow, no matter how black the girls choose to look at the sight of me."

As to Dolly, once the excitement of the struggle over, all her strength seemed to ooze out at her fingers'-ends.

She made her way out of the deserted garden, and soon got among the sandy dunes that lay between that place and home.

But, being so blinded with the tears that rose and blurred her sight, here she stumbled and tripped—and almost lost her footing!

Indeed, just beside the pine wood she would have fallen altogether, but for a pair of strong arms that caught her, and lips that kissed the tears away until she could see quite clearly that it was Jack's face so close to her own.

"Is this Jack's sweetheart?" said he, smiling, and holding her a little distance off the better to look at her.

And for all answer she clung about his neck, sobbing; and kissed him in between the sobs.

"I was there, Dolly dear, among the bushes—I heard every word you said, and know all about it now. So you'd 'rather walk barefoot wi' me, than ride in a carriage wi' him,' would you, my darling? Well! that's as it should be; and now, come home to Jael, or she'll think her little lass is lost."


"Was it Jael sent you after me?" said Dolly amazedly.

"Jael it was," replied Jack; "she told me to go and hear for myself what my sweetheart had to say to the fine gentleman who (some folks said) had stolen her dear heart from me."

There is little more to add. Jack's sweetheart has been Jack's wife this many a year, and they have yet to have their first quarrel—always excepting the one under the shadow of the thorn-tree, the one whose story has now been told.

The Right of Translating any of the Articles contained in this Number is reserved by the Authors.

V.
S.
S.
f
7
n
3
9
0
l
r
. .
3
9
2
9
3
l
9
9
3
4
9
[
7
9
[
9
[
A
7
9
9
-
.



FOUNDED 1806,

PROVIDENT LIFE OFFICE.

FOUNDED MORE THAN 76 YEARS AGO,

HAS NOW

INVESTED FUNDS AMOUNTING TO £2,299,086.


IT HAS PAID IN CLAIMS NEARLY

SEVEN MILLION POUNDS STERLING,

AND HAS DECLARED BONUSES EXCEEDING

£2,600,000.

50, REGENT ST., W., & 14, CORNHILL, E.C.,
LONDON.



NOVELLO, EWEE & CO., Printers, 60 & 70, Dean Street, Soho, London.

PROVIDENT LIFE OFFICE

50, Regent Street, W., & 14, Cornhill, E.C.

FOUNDED 1806.

Extract from Report of the Directors for the year 1882.

"Proposals were received for Assurances amounting to £667,670. Of these the Directors declined £75,100 and accepted £592,570, the largest amount of new business ever done by the office in one year. The new premiums amounted to £19,211.

The Claims were £162,836 13s. 9d., being £3,790 less than those for 1881.

The Annual Income from all sources increased from £290,077 to £300,973.

The Invested Funds amounted to £2,299,086, as compared with £2,207,986 in 1881.

With the close of the year 1882 was completed another quinquennial or bonus period; within which great progress has been made, as will be seen in the following figures:—

Period of Five Years.	Amount of New Premiums.	Amount of New Assurances.
1863 to 1867	£58,913	£1,742,905
1868 „ 1872	58,706	1,763,498
1873 „ 1877	68,032	2,023,788
1878 „ 1882	88,175	2,683,111

The quinquennial valuation shows a surplus of £499,031 17s. 8d. Under the deed of constitution, one-half must be reserved and will accumulate at interest until the next division of profits in 1888. The other half, £249,515 18s. 10d., will be divided between the shareholders and policyholders, in the proportion required by the deed, the shareholders receiving £8,145 only, the policyholders £241,370 18s. 10d., the reversionary value of which sum will be added to their policies.

The position of the office, then, stands thus: After making full provision for every policy liability, upon a stringent net premium valuation, and after the distribution of a bonus of £241,370 18s. 10d. to the policyholders, and £8,145 to the shareholders, the Provident commences another quinquennial period, dating from January 1, 1883, with a surplus of £249,515 18s. 10d., in itself an element of great strength, and a source of profit for the next bonus distribution to be made five years hence. Under these conditions, the Directors confidently look forward to a career of unabated success and of continued progress."

A copy of the Report of the Directors and the Chairman's Address at the last General Meeting will be forwarded on application to

CHAS. STEVENS, Secretary.

FRAUD!

(Counterfeit Label)



BEST
BIRD'S EYE.



**W.D.&H.O.WILLS,
BRISTOL**

EVERY PACKET OF OUR "BEST BIRD'S EYE"
BEARS OUR SIGNATURE THUS

W.D. & H.O. Wills

TO IMITATE WHICH IS FORGERY

TRADE MARK



(Genuine Label)



PRIZE MEDAL
1882



**W.D.&H.O.WILLS,
BRISTOL.**

EVERY PACKET OF OUR "BEST BIRD'S EYE"
BEARS OUR SIGNATURE THUS

W.D. & H.O. Wills

TO IMITATE WHICH IS FORGERY

TRADE MARK



CAUTION.

W. D. & H. O. WILLS invite the public to carefully examine the above, and to compare the *Counterfeit* with the *Genuine* Label.

This (one of many gross imitations which have recently come under their notice) is a counterfeit detected in Copenhagen, *being a copy of the label used on their 4-lb. tins*; and they will be much obliged for any information leading to the detection of similar frauds.

Smokers are advised to observe that every packet of WILLS' "BEST BIRD'S EYE" Tobacco bears their Name and Trade Mark, "a Star;" and also to note that *every Label contains the WATER-MARK* of the Firm, which can be seen in this paper when held up to the light.

W.D. & H.O. WILLS.

W.D & H.O. WILLS



LONDON.



NEW ZEALAND.



CAUTION { These Choice Tobaccos are sold only in Packets,
with Name and Trade Mark.

CAUTION { These Choice Tobaccos are sold only in Packets,
with Name and Trade Mark.

IMPORTANT FAMILY MEDICINE.

TRADE



MARK.

CAMOMILE PILLS,

THE

MOST CERTAIN PRESERVER OF HEALTH,

A MILD, YET SPEEDY, SAFE, AND

EFFECTUAL AID IN CASES OF INDIGESTION

AND ALL STOMACH COMPLAINTS,

AND, AS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE,

PURIFIER OF THE BLOOD AND SWEETENER OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

INDIGESTION is a weakness or want of power of the digestive juices in the stomach to convert what we eat and drink into healthy matter for the proper nourishment of the whole system. It is caused by everything which weakens the system in general, or the stomach in particular. From it proceed nearly all the diseases to which we are liable; for it is very certain that if we could always keep the stomach right we should only die by old age or accident. Indigestion produces a great variety of unpleasant sensations; amongst the most prominent of its miserable effects are a want of, or an inordinate appetite, sometimes attended with a constant craving for drink, a distension or feeling of enlargement of the stomach, flatulency, heartburn, pain in the stomach, acidity, unpleasant taste in the mouth, perhaps sickness, rumbling noise in the bowels; in some cases of depraved digestion there is nearly a complete disrelish for food, but still the appetite is not greatly impaired, as at the stated period of meals persons so afflicted can eat heartily, although without much gratification; a long train of nervous symptoms are also frequent attendants, general debility, great languidness, and incapacity for exertion. The minds of persons so afflicted frequently become irritable and desponding, and great anxiety is observable in the countenance; they appear thoughtful, melancholy, and dejected, under great apprehension of some imaginary danger, will start at any unexpected noise or occurrence, and become so agitated that they require some time to calm and collect themselves; yet for all this the mind is exhilarated

without much difficulty; pleasing events, society, will for a time dissipate all appearance of disease; but the excitement produced by an agreeable change vanishes soon after the cause has gone by. Other symptoms are, violent palpitations, restlessness, the sleep disturbed by frightful dreams and startings, and affording little or no refreshment; occasionally there is much moaning, with a sense of weight and oppression upon the chest, nightmare, &c.

It is almost impossible to enumerate all the symptoms of this first invader upon the constitution, as in a hundred cases of *Indigestion* there will probably be something peculiar to each; but be they what they may, they are all occasioned by the food becoming a burden rather than a support to the stomach; and in all its stages the medicine most wanted is that which will afford speedy and effectual assistance to the digestive organs, and give energy to the nervous and muscular systems—nothing can more speedily, or with more certainty, effect so desirable an object than *Norton's Extract of Camomile Flowers*. The herb has from time immemorial been highly esteemed in England as a grateful anodyne, imparting an aromatic bitter to the taste and a pleasing degree of warmth and strength to the stomach; and in all cases of indigestion, gout in the stomach, windy colic, and general weakness, it has for ages been strongly recommended by the most eminent practitioners as very useful and beneficial. The great, indeed only, objection to its use has been the large quantity of water which it takes to dissolve a small part of the flowers and

which must be taken with it into the stomach. It requires a quarter of a pint of boiling water to dissolve the soluble portion of one drachm of Camomile Flowers; and when one or even two ounces may be taken with advantage, it must at once be seen how impossible it is to take a proper dose of this wholesome herb in the form of tea; and the only reason why it has not long since been placed the very first in rank of all restorative medicines is, that in taking it the stomach has always been loaded with water, which tends in a great measure to counteract, and very frequently wholly to destroy, the effect. It must be evident that loading a weak stomach with a large quantity of water, merely for the purpose of conveying into it a small quantity of medicine, must be injurious; and that the medicine must possess powerful renovating properties only to counteract the bad effects likely to be produced by the water. Generally speaking, this has been the case with Camomile Flowers, a herb possessing the highest restorative qualities, and when properly taken, decidedly the most speedy restorer, and the most certain preserver of health.

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS

are prepared by a peculiar process, accidentally discovered, and known only to the proprietor, and which he firmly believes to be one of the most valuable modern discoveries in medicine, by which all the essential and extractive matter of more than an ounce of the flowers is concentrated in four moderate-sized pills. Experience has afforded the most ample proof that they possess all the fine aromatic and stomachic properties for which the herb has been esteemed; and, as they are taken into the stomach unencumbered by any diluting or indigestible substance, in the same degree has their benefit been more immediate and decided. Mild in their operation and pleasant in their effect, they may be taken at any age, and under any circumstances, without danger or inconvenience. A person exposed to cold and wet a whole day or night could not possibly receive any injury from taking them, but, on the contrary, they would effectually prevent a cold being taken. After a long acquaintance with and strict observance of the medicinal properties of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, it is only doing them justice to say, that they are really the most valuable of all Tonic Medicines. By the word tonic is meant a medicine

which gives strength to the stomach sufficient to digest in proper quantities all wholesome food, which increases the power of every nerve and muscle of the human body, or, in other words, invigorates the nervous and muscular systems. The solidity or firmness of the whole tissue of the body, which so quickly follows the use of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, their certain and speedy effect in repairing the partial dilapidations from time or intemperance, and their lasting salutary influence on the whole frame, is most convincing, that in the smallest compass is contained the largest quantity of the tonic principle, of so peculiar a nature as to pervade the whole system, through which it diffuses health and strength sufficient to resist the formation of disease, and also to fortify the constitution against contagion; as such their general use is strongly recommended as a preventative during the prevalence of malignant fever or other infectious diseases, and to persons attending sick-rooms they are invaluable, as in no one instance have they ever failed in preventing the taking of illness, even under the most trying circumstances.

As *Norton's Camomile Pills* are particularly recommended for all stomach complaints or indigestion, it will probably be expected that some advice should be given respecting diet, though after all that has been written upon the subject, after the publication of volume upon volume, after the country has, as it were, been inundated with practical essays on diet as a means of prolonging life, it would be unnecessary to say more, did we not feel it our duty to make the humble endeavour of inducing the public to regard them not, but to adopt that course which is dictated by nature, by reason, and by common sense. Those persons who study the wholesomes, and are governed by the opinion of writers on diet, are uniformly both unhealthy in body and weak in mind. There can be no doubt that the palate is designed to inform us what is proper for the stomach, and of course that must best instruct us what food to take and what to avoid; we want no other adviser. Nothing can be more clear than that those articles which are agreeable to the taste were by nature intended for our food and sustenance, whether liquid or solid, foreign or of native production; if they are pure and unadulterated, no harm need be dreaded by

their use; they will only injure by abuse. Consequently, whatever the palate approves, eat and drink always in moderation, but never in excess; keeping in mind that the first process of digestion is performed in the mouth, the second in the stomach; and that, in order that the stomach may be able to do its work properly, it is requisite the first process should be well performed; this consists in masticating or chewing the solid food, so as to break down and separate the fibres and small substances of meat and vegetable, mixing them well, and blending the whole together before they are swallowed; and it is particularly urged upon all to take plenty of time to their meals and never eat in haste. If you conform to this short and simple, but comprehensive advice, and find that there are various things which others eat and drink with pleasure and without inconvenience, and which would be pleasant to yourself only that they disagree, you may at once conclude that the fault is in the stomach, that it does not possess the power which it ought to do, that it wants assistance, and the sooner that assistance is afforded the better. A very short trial of this medicine will best prove how soon it will put the stomach in a condition to perform with ease all the work which nature intended for it. By its use you will soon be able to enjoy, in moderation, whatever is agreeable to the taste, and unable to name one individual article of food which disagrees with or sits unpleasantly on the stomach. Never forget that a small meal well digested affords more nourishment to the system than a large one, even of the same food, when digested imperfectly. Let the dish be ever so delicious, ever so enticing a variety offered, the bottle ever so enchanting, never forget that temperance tends to preserve health, and that health is the soul of enjoyment. But should an impropriety be at any time, or ever so often committed, by which the stomach becomes overloaded or disordered, render it immediate aid by taking a dose of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, which will so promptly assist in carrying off the bur-

den thus imposed upon it, that all will soon be right again.

It is most certainly true that every person in his lifetime consumes a quantity of noxious matter, which if taken at one meal would be fatal: it is these small quantities of noxious matter, which are introduced into our food, either by accident or wilful adulteration, which we find so often upset the stomach, and not unfrequently lay the foundation of illness, and perhaps final ruin to health. To preserve the constitution, it should be our constant care, if possible, to counteract the effect of these small quantities of unwholesome matter; and whenever, in that way, an enemy to the constitution finds its way into the stomach, a friend should immediately be sent after it, which would prevent its mischievous effects, and expel it altogether; no better friend can be found—no, none which will perform the task with greater certainty, than **NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS**. And let it be observed, that the longer this medicine is taken the less it will be wanted, and it can in no case become habitual, as its entire action is to give energy and force to the stomach, which is the spring of life, the source from which the whole frame draws its succour and support. After an excess of eating or drinking, and upon every occasion of the general health being at all disturbed, these **PILLS** should be immediately taken, as they will stop and eradicate disease at its commencement. Indeed, it is most confidently asserted that, by the timely use of this medicine only, and a common degree of caution, any person may enjoy all the comforts within his reach, may pass through life without an illness, and with the certainty of attaining a healthy **OLD AGE**.

On account of their volatile properties, they must be kept in bottles; and if closely corked their qualities are neither impaired by time nor injured by any change of climate whatever. Price 13½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions. The large bottle contains the quantity of three small ones, or **PILLS** equal to fourteen ounces of **CAMOMILE FLOWERS**.

Sold by nearly all respectable Medicine Vendors.

Be particular to ask for "**NORTON'S PILLS**," and do not be persuaded to purchase an imitation.

A CLEAR COMPLEXION!!!

GODFREY'S EXTRACT OF ELDER FLOWERS

IS strongly recommended for Softening, Improving, Beautifying, and Preserving the SKIN, and giving it a blooming and charming appearance. It will completely remove Tan, Sunburn, Redness, &c., and by its Balsamic and Healing qualities render the skin soft, pliable, and free from dryness, &c., clear it from every humour, pimple, or eruption; and by continuing its use only a short time, the skin will become and continue soft and smooth, and the complexion perfectly clear and beautiful.

Sold : Bottles, price 2s. 9d., by all Medicine Vendors and Perfumers.

STEEDMAN'S SOOTHING POWDERS FOR CHILDREN CUTTING TEETH.

THE value of this Medicine has been largely tested in all parts of the world and by all grades of society for upwards of fifty years.

Its extensive sale has induced spurious imitations, in some of which the outside Label and the coloured Paper enclosing the Packet of Powders so closely resemble the Original as to have deceived many Purchasers. The Proprietor therefore feels it due to the Public to give a special caution against such imitations.

All purchasers are therefore requested carefully to observe that the words "JOHN STEEDMAN, Chemist, Walworth, Surrey," are engraved on the Government Stamp affixed to each Packet, in White Letters on a Red Ground, without which none are genuine. The name STEEDMAN is spelt with *two EE's*.

**Prepared ONLY at Walworth, Surrey, and
Sold by all Chemists and Medicine Vendors,
in Packets, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. each.**

!

S

Pre-
ence,
amic
ness,
g its
and

ne

S

world

which
t of
Pur-
cial

ords
en-
ters
name

nd

rs,

GOLD MEDAL

PARIS, 1878.



JOSEPH GILLOTT'S

CELEBRATED
STEEL PENS.

SOLD BY ALL DEALERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

Every Packet bears the fac-simile
Signature,

PULVERMACHER'S IMPROVED PATENT CALVANIC CHAIN BANDS, BELTS, ETC.

Approved by the Academy of Medicine of Paris, and other Medical Authorities in England and Abroad.

THESE HIGHLY-IMPROVED INVENTIONS render Electricity in a mild continuous form, perfectly self-applicable, and extremely efficacious, no shock or unpleasant sensation being experienced, it thus becomes a true fountain of health and vigour, speedily soothing agonising pains, reanimating torpid limbs, reviving the sluggish functions of life, and imparting the renewed energy and vitality to constitutions enfeebled by various influences. The daily increasing number of cures effected by PULVERMACHER'S MEDICO-CALVANIC SYSTEM in cases of

**Indigestion,
Liver Complaints,
Neuralgia,**

**Sciatica,
Deafness,
Loss of Voice,**

**Asthma,
Bronchitis,
Paralysis,**

**Epilepsy,
Rheumatism,
Constipation,**

**General Debility,
Female Complaints,
Functional Disorders, etc.,**

is proved by innumerable Testimonials both Medical and Private. These GALVANIC CHAIN BANDS, by supplying the electrical deficiency, constitute Nature's most congenial curative in the ailments referred to, thereby embodying a host of remedies in one. Thirty-five years' successful experience has proved the marvellous remedial powers of these appliances, even in cases defying ordinary treatment. MR. PULVERMACHER begs to draw attention to the opinions of competent medical and scientific authorities, including SIR C. LOCOCK, Bart., M.D., F.R.C.S.; SIR HENRY HOLLAND, Bart., M.D., F.R.C.S., and F.R.S.; SIR J. R. MARTIN, Bart., C.B., F.R.C.S., F.S.A., and F.R.S.; SIR W. FERGUSON, Bart., M.D., F.R.S., F.R.C.S., &c. &c., published in Pamphlet, "GALVANISM, NATURE'S CHIEF RESTORER OF IMPAIRED VITAL ENERGY."

SENT POST FREE ON APPLICATION TO

Mr. J. L. Pulvermacher, Galvanic Establishment, 194, Regent St., London, W.

Furnish your House or Apartments throughout ON MOEDER'S HIRE SYSTEM.

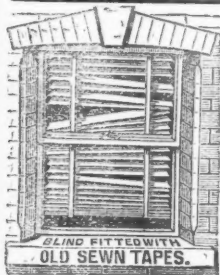
The Original, Best, and most Liberal Cash Prices.
NO EXTRA CHARGE FOR TIME GIVEN.

Illustrated printed Catalogues, with full particulars of terms, Post Free.

F. MOEDER,

248, 249, 250, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD; & 19, 20, 21, MORWELL ST., W.

ESTABLISHED 1852.



CARR'S PATENT WOVEN TAPES FOR VENETIAN BLINDS.

SOLD BY FURNISHING IRONMONGERS, DRAPERS, &c.

SPECIAL FEATURE.—The small cross-tapes on which the laths rest, are INTERWOVEN, not simply sewn, and cannot possibly give way.

A SURE PREVENTIVE AGAINST BROKEN BLINDS.

Sold "ready for use," and can be applied by anyone.

CAUTION.—Every yard is stamped with the name "**CARR'S**" on one of the INTERWOVEN cross-tapes.



FOR
INFANTS & INVALIDS.
GIVES HEALTH,
STRENGTH, COMFORT,
QUIET NIGHTS, TO
MOTHERS, NURSES,
AND INVALIDS.
SOLD EVERYWHERE.

THE WONDERFUL VELVETEENS

FOR LADIES' DRESSES TO BE HAD IN MANCHESTER.

LEWIS'S in Market-street, MANCHESTER, are the manufacturers of fine, first-class Velveteens, which will be known all over the world as the "Bon Marché" Velveteens. They are fast pile and fast dyed, and every inch is guaranteed. If a dress should wear badly or be in any respect faulty, LEWIS'S will give a new dress for nothing at all, and pay the full cost for making and trimming. The price of these beautiful Velveteens in Black and all the most beautiful Colours now worn is 2s. a yard. This quality Velveteen is sold by the best Drapers at 3s. 6d., 4s. 6d., and 5s. 6d. a yard. The public, although they don't know it, have to pay two or three profits, the difference between the manufacturer's price, and the price the consumer pays for Velveteens. In addition to the ordinary shades, LEWIS'S manufacture these beautiful Velveteens in all the new and fashionable tints for the spring, comprising Electric, Terra-cotta, Moss, Mahogany, Buttercup, Mandarin, Sapphire, Coral, Brown Doré, Anemone, Crevette, and Tabac. LEWIS'S pay carriage on all orders amounting to 40s. and upwards, to any address in the United Kingdom. Write for Patterns on an ordinary post-card.

LEWIS'S IN MARKET ST., MANCHESTER.

When writing, please mention this Magazine.

SEDDON & WIER'S TEAS.

SAMPLES AND PRICE LISTS FREE.

1, BEER LANE, Great Tower St., London, E.C.

THE CENTURY DRESS FABRICS

ARE THE
BEST IN THE
WORLD!

Since commencing our system of selling **direct to the Customer at mill prices**, we have received, unsolicited from all parts of the Kingdom, the MOST FLATTERING TESTIMONIALS. We are determined to make it worth the while of every Lady to buy her Dress Materials **DIRECT** from us, which will mean A GREAT SAVING OF MONEY AND THE CERTAINTY OF GETTING THE **BEST MAKE AND STYLE OF THE DAY**. All the leading Dress Journals speak in the highest praise of our productions and the marvellously low prices charged. We send Patterns **POST-FREE**, CUT ANY LENGTH, AT MILL PRICES, and pay Carriage upon all Parcels over £1 in value. Terms Cash. Write at once for our splendid selection of NEW CHECKS, FANCY ALL-WOOLS, CASHMERES, NUN'S VEIL CLOTHS, ZEPHYRS, PRINTED SATTEENS, &c.—When writing, please mention this Magazine.

THE BRADFORD MANUFACTURING COMPANY, Bradford, Yorkshire.

REYNOLDS' GOUT SPECIFIC

DR BREWSTER

(for many years one of the leading

Physicians in Paris) writes: "I have prescribed

'REYNOLDS' GOUT SPECIFIC' in ALL cases of Rheumatic

Affections, and find it an INFALLIBLE Remedy. I have always had great pleasure

in recommending it, and consider it a safe and INVALUABLE MEDICINE."

Sold in Bottles, 2s. 9d. and 4s. 6d. by

MESSRS. BARCLAY & SONS, 95, FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.

And all Chemists throughout the United Kingdom.

CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS, 24, GREAT NEW STREET, LONDON.

DS.

RT,
TO
ES,

RE.

s the
ning.
y the
rence
ising

ME.

S

C.

HE
THE
!

ave
LS.
RT
NG
the
NY
our
RS,

e.

B

STER
ading
ribed
mmatic
asure

THE EXTRA

SUMMER NUMBER

OF

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CONTAINING THE AMOUNT OF THREE ORDINARY NUMBERS.

PRICE]

1883.

[SIXPENCE.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
DOROTHY, WIFE OF —	1	THE OTHER SIDE	37
A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE	19	IN THE NICK OF TIME	44
THE ROMANCE OF A LIGHTHOUSE	26	OUTGROWN IT	51
THE PURRINGTON TRAGEDY	62		

DOROTHY, WIFE OF —.

By "RITA."

CHAPTER I.

Though you loved then—
Though I love now.

THE old church was set high on a hill, that sloped down to the valley below, in which a little village nestled.

The valley, indeed, was surrounded on all sides by hills, some towering and lofty, others small and insignificant, but all seeming to shelter the little green nook, with its winding river and low, level fields in a sort of loving and protecting fashion.

Here and there a wood broke the monotony of the scene, the dark foliage of firs standing out in rich relief against the paler tints of larch, and oak, and ivy. Above the sloping hills, the glowing hues of the sky spread themselves in a hundred gradations of colour, and the flush of sunset rested warm and bright on the old grey tower of the church, and the time-worn headstones that marked the quiet resting-places of the dead.

Quaint, restful, still—with that stillness that only the country gathers to itself in the hush of eventide—so the little churchyard lay in the spring sunset; and a man wandering listlessly through the yew-shaded paths, paused suddenly and lifted his hat, and standing there bareheaded in the fading light, looked upwards to the old tower as if some long thought held him in a spell of silence and abstraction.

The beautiful dusky glow faded slowly into the clear, pearly grey of twilight, before he seemed to remember where he was, or rouse himself from that absorbed contemplation. Then, with a start and a sigh, he replaced his hat and moved on again along the path, stopping here and there to read some quaint epitaph, or half-obliterated inscription.

Curious enough some of them were, bringing a faint smile to the worn handsome face of the reader. A face where smiles looked almost out of place, so stern was the expression of brow and lips.

The light was getting less distinct as he strolled on to the low boundary-wall and stood leaning there, while his eyes dwelt lingeringly on the dark range of hills that shut in the little sleepy village. The river wound in and out like a silver ribbon. There was no sign of life anywhere, nor any sound, except a faint bleat from some stray lamb, or the rustle of the young leaves as a faint wind touched the budding trees.

The peace and beauty seemed to soothe him, in that inexplicable way of which Nature alone holds the secret. His face grew less stern, the hard look seemed to leave it, and, though a sigh escaped his lips, it was more of relief than of pain.

Marston Dare had had a hard and troubled life for almost all the thirty years that it had numbered. But it never had seemed so hard as when the seal of a woman's treachery had set itself upon that toilsome and poverty-stricken existence, and

made him curse the fate that brought him face to face with her beauty and her worthlessness. And she was worthless, he told himself. But it is a hard thing to kill love, when once it takes root in these strong, steadfast natures, and Dare had not killed it yet, despite his struggles, his sufferings, and his broken faith.

Even work, that panacea for most troubles, had failed to drive away a memory he hated as well as loved. He had only taxed a willing brain to its utmost, and found physical strength incapable of answering to his demands. With fame and honours at his feet, he had been obliged to relinquish the efforts made to win them.

"Perfect rest and change of scene. Nothing else will do you any good," said the fashionable physician he had consulted.

And something within him—that same complicated mechanism whose nerves and forces he had overtaxed so ruthlessly—told him that the advice was true and the change and rest necessary.

Chance alone had brought him to this spot. He had fixed upon Shropshire for a change, and travelling on to where its boundaries almost touched the hills of Wales, found himself in a quaint little old-world nook, as beautiful in its way as many a tourist-haunted spot of guide-book celebrity. Standing there to-night, with the soft spring air fanning his brow, and the peace and beauty of the country all around, such a feeling of rest came to brain and heart as had long been strange to both.

He still leaned against the low brown wall, but his eyes had left the dusky hills, and came back to the old church-tower, and again from there roved to where those dim grey headstones had faced the sun and shadow of many centuries. Coming back from that long pause of quiet thought, he turned away as if to leave the churchyard. The moon had risen now, and the sky seemed full of clear and brilliant light, not cold or glittering, but filled with a soft transparence, against which the towering hills and dusky woods looked like dim, soft shapes.

One long quivering ray of silver fell through the branches of a giant oak, and, so falling, showed beneath the great wide boughs a single stone that gleamed marble-white among the shadows. Curiosity, impulse, idleness—what matters by what name we call those apparently reasonless motives which now and then prompt

our actions?—one or all of these made Marston Dare pause, and read the single line that lay graven black, and deep, and strangely distinct upon that smooth white surface.

Not much to read, indeed; but enough, so it seemed, to draw a look of puzzled wonder to his eyes; enough to demand a re-perusal of itself; enough to make him thoughtful again as he leant against the old oak boughs and gazed at that strange inscription:

"Dorothy, wife of —."

That was all, except a date.

No other record of the woman in whose memory it had been raised.

The stone looked almost new, but from its position was not likely to attract much observation. Marston Dare might have passed it again and again without noticing it, but that ray of moonlight seemed to bring it out in strong, almost startling distinctness. There seemed to the young man something almost ghastly in the clear white and gleaming black of that significant announcement—something that seemed to startle the peace and holiness of its surroundings by an air of mystery as weird as it was unaccountable.

Bending still closer, he perceived to his astonishment that there had been other words following those already quoted, but that these had been purposely effaced from the stone, and a black stroke painted in their place.

"What can be the meaning of it?" he asked himself, turning away at last. He resolved to ask at his inn for some information about this mysterious "Dorothy." It seemed to him that the grave was comparatively new, and surely something must be known of the woman whom it held.

He left the churchyard and went down the solitary straggling street which represented the village. It was innocent as yet of gaslight, but the rare clearness of the atmosphere compensated for that deficiency on the present occasion.

Just as he reached the inn the sound of wheels made him look round.

He saw a smart-looking trap dashing along, driven by a lady. Behind her sat a man in livery. As she passed the inn-door her glance fell on the solitary figure standing there. With an audible exclamation of amazement she checked the horse and drew up beside him.

"You here!" she exclaimed.

His face paled somewhat, but eye and

voice were sufficiently under command to answer her.

"As you see," he answered quietly. "I have come down to ruralise, by medical orders. And you?"

"I?" she murmured in some confusion. "Did you not know? I live here. At least, for the present. One of Sir Andrew's places is Tedsmere, four miles from this village."

"Indeed," he said quietly. "No, I did not know. How should I?"

Whatever his words reminded her of, the shamed blush on her cheek deepened, and her voice was anything but steady as she said faintly:

"Of course you could not. I forgot. Only when I saw you——"

He interrupted her almost fiercely:

"You surely do not suppose I should have come here had I known?"

"No; I dare say not. You—I mean I could hardly expect you would forgive."

"Forgive!" he cried passionately. Then, checking himself, with a glance at her groom: "I beg your pardon, Lady Lynne; I am detaining you, I fear."

"Not at all," she said hurriedly. "May I hope you will call and see me—us, I mean—as you are so near? It must be so dull for you here, and Sir Andrew could offer you some fishing——"

A bitter smile curved his lips.

"I like dulness, thank you," he said very quietly, "and I could not think of trespassing on Sir Andrew's time and attention, even if I liked fishing—which I don't."

Her eyes met his own, but their appeal read no response. She knew that her power was over, and the knowledge incensed her. It seemed so hard that he should refuse her anything—he who had once been abject as a slave at her mercy.

It always is hard for a woman to believe that her influence is a thing of the past—hard to credit that the more abject a man's subjection, the more complete also is his defection, when once his passion is spent or slain.

Marston Dare's had been so slain by the woman who now looked back into his stern cold eyes—slain utterly and for ever, even though its memory had power to sting him still:

Like a dreaming snake
Drowsily lifting itself fold by fold.

But there was almost hatred in his heart now, as he looked at her fair face and heard her voice speaking out that insult to his

own poverty, which lay in her changed position, and which had been gained by her own baseness and treachery.

The memory of that old delirious worship seemed to madden him as he stood there by her side, controlling voice and face to his will, for fear that one sign of weakness should yield her another triumph. He succeeded better than he imagined: so well, indeed, that his cold smile and scornful glance smote her with such pain as he never dreamt of—so well, that as her lips dropped conventional phrases, her heart ached as never it had ached before—so well, that even in the fulness of her triumph at this parade of wealth, she felt she would have given anything to feel his arms around her once again, only to know the old love held him hers as once she knew it had done.

His curt replies, his cool self-possession, roused a passion of anger and misery within her breast, all the more so because she knew her acting to be inferior to his own; because, try as she would for sign of relenting, or softening of voice or look, she met none.

She went on her way baffled and defeated, and all the glory of the sweet spring night seemed to thrill and pain her with its memories of that face she loved—that passion she had roused and fanned, and then had rejected.

"What a fool I was," she thought to herself, as she lashed the horse with a sudden impatient anger, that sent him flying along the steep and stony road; "what a fool! But the temptation was too strong. I could not have been a poor man's wife. And yet how paltry and insignificant everything looked to-night when I met his eyes, and read in them how he scorned me! Can his love have changed like that in twelve short months? Can he have forgotten, and I—not?"

The man of whom she thought sat by the window of the inn parlour, the lines of pain gathering once more around his eyes and on his brow.

"Rest—peace—have I dreamt of them for this to break the charm?" he muttered below his breath. "What weak, contemptible creatures we are! Bah! why do I think of her? Love was wasted on a woman like that, who cares for nothing save what ministers to her comfort and ambition. She thought to flaunt her honours before my eyes, did she? Nay, my lady, I have not yet sunk low enough

to accept your friendship—or that of the man to whom you sold yourself for the gold I lacked.”

Then he turned from the window as the landlady of the little inn entered with candles and the refreshments he had ordered.

Bringing back his disturbed thoughts by a great effort, he began to chat to the rosy-faced, pleasant-looking little widow who owned The Admiral Nelson.

He spoke of the church and his visit there; and then remembering the strange headstone which had so puzzled him, asked the woman if she knew anything of its history.

He was surprised to see her ruddy face grow pale and alarmed. She began to fidget restlessly with her apron.

“It’s a queer thing, sir,” she said, with a nervous glance at the door, “and we don’t like much to talk of it. There is a mystery, as you say, about that grave-stone. That name has been struck out by no mortal hands.”

“What!” laughed Marston Dare, looking up at her alarmed face. “Whose hands, then, performed the mysterious office?”

“That’s more nor anyone can tell you,” she answered solemnly; then, sinking her voice even more mysteriously: “Only, sir, folks do say that ’tis Mistress Dorothy’s ghost as walks still.”

“A ghost!” smiled her listener. “Better and better. You don’t mean to say you have a ghost here? Pray who was Mistress Dorothy?”

“That’s a long story, sir. I——”

“No matter,” he interrupted; “sit down and tell it me over a glass of your own good ale. I’m fond of hearing stories.”

With one more apprehensive glance over her shoulder, as if she feared the ghost would assert itself in person, Mrs. Pugh took the seat her guest proffered, and proceeded to tell her tale.

CHAPTER II.

A sense of mystery the spirit daunted.

“You see, sir,” began Mrs. Pugh, “the Hursts, of Hurst Hall, have been squires of Weirbrook for many and many a generation back. Perhaps you’ve seen the old Hall as you came through the village. No? Well, it’s a place one might miss as soon as see, it’s so shut in by woods. They were strange people, the Hursts, and not over much liked, specially the old squire and his son. It’s the son I’m going

to tell you about, he who married Mistress Dorothy. None of the Hursts, so folks say, ever seemed to care to live at the Hall, and yet ’tis a fine old place, and has cost a power o’ money in its time. Mr. Anthony was the only son of the old squire, but he and his father never seemed to agree well. You see Mr. Anthony was a bit wild, and had the true Hurst temper—violent and overbearing—and he and the old man used to quarrel terribly; so Mr. Anthony oftener than not stayed in London or travelled in foreign parts, when the old squire was at the Hall. Well, the old man died very sudden (all the Hursts mostly do die like that), and Mr. Anthony came back from wherever he was, for the funeral, and when it was all over and things were a bit settled, we thought he’d be leaving the place as usual, for he never made a secret of how he hated it, and how dull he thought it. But this time he did not seem in such a hurry to leave, and yet he had none of his fine friends down from London, nor seemed to do anything to make the time pass more lively. At last a story got whispered about the place as to how Mr. Anthony had found some attraction to keep him at Hurst. You must know, sir, that about five miles from the old Hall, on the other side of the Hurst property, is a queer old tumbledown-looking place called Weirhurst, the property of two old maiden ladies of the name of Clyffe. They had living with them at that time a niece, the child of their only brother, who had been killed in the Indian Mutiny. She was a beautiful young lady, and so sweet and good, and they just idolised her. Well, Mr. Anthony had met her somehow, in one of her walks or rides, and made friends with her, and then with the old ladies; and, to make a long story short, we heard he was to be married to Miss Dorothy. Of course every one thought it would be a fine thing for quite a penniless girl like she was, to be mistress of the Hall and lady of Hurst; but somehow it seemed we were all wrong. They were married in London quite privately, and the only time they came to the Hall was about a year after their wedding, and then they only stayed a month, and Mistress Dorothy went nowhere except to see the old ladies at Weirhurst; and one or two that saw her said she was sadly altered, and had quite lost her good looks. After that we saw and heard no more of her till she came back one dreary winter’s night—not

to the Hall, where by rights she should have come—but to her old home at Weirhurst. And there she died."

Mrs. Pugh here refreshed herself with a glass of ale, and then proceeded, dropping her voice to a mysterious whisper:

"Folks do say Mr. Anthony just broke her heart; and since her death he's been wilder and worse than ever. He came down to the funeral, and 'twas he had her buried in that quiet place, not in the vault of the Hursts. And now comes the strangest part of all. That stone for the grave came down from London, and was put up about a month after her death. 'Tis very simple, as you saw, sir; only a cross, and on it was written 'Dorothy, wife of Anthony Hurst.' The night after that was fixed was a very wild and stormy one. Next day some lad of the village who'd been up to the churchyard, came back saying that Mistress Dorothy's stone had had the name struck out. We didn't believe it at first; but first one and then another went to see, and true enough the stone was as it is now. There was a great stir and fuss about it, and the clergyman, he wrote to Mr. Anthony, but he had left London again and gone abroad. At last he sent word to let it alone, and so it has remained ever since."

"And what is the general belief about the mystery?" enquired Marston Dare, as the story closed, and he looked half amusedly across at his companion's grave face.

"The general belief is, sir, that no mortal hand have struck out that poor lady's name," she answered solemnly. "Perhaps there was some foul play about her death—perhaps her spirit can't rest in peace; as his wife, perhaps——"

"My good woman," interrupted Marston Dare with a laugh, "spirits or ghosts, or whatever you like to call them, can't use tools, or do mason's work. Nonsense! the mystery is connected with some flesh-and-blood apparition of a very material description. Only no one has had the pluck to watch and fathom it."

Mrs. Pugh shook her head in respectful difference to her guest's opinions. It was not likely they could change her own, which had been the growth of many years and steady prejudice, and that bovine obstinacy which seems indigenous to country-folk.

There was silence between them for a few moments. Then Marston Dare lifted his thoughtful face, and looked at her.

"What has become of the old ladies—

the aunts?" he asked. "Do they still live at Weirhurst?"

"One of them does," she answered—"the youngest, Mistress Alice Clyffe. The eldest is dead. They were very stately, old-fashioned ladies, and always liked to be called Mistress Clyffe and Mistress Alice. 'Twas the same, too, with Miss Dorothy. Poor young lady! She was so fair, and so young, and so innocent—it seems cruel to think that she should have had such a fate. And only three-and-twenty when she died!"

"The best thing that could have happened to her, it seems to me," said Dare gloomily.

Mrs. Pugh now rose from her chair, and stood twisting the corner of her apron in her plump white fingers.

"Is there anything more you would wish for, sir?" she enquired, intent once more upon her duties as a hostess.

"Nothing, thank you," he said courteously. "I am much obliged for your story, though—it has interested me greatly."

"You're quite welcome, I'm sure, sir."

She retreated to the door, held it open a moment, cast one hesitating glance at the tall grave figure standing by the table, then came back a step or two.

"You don't believe it was a ghost, then, sir?" she said hesitatingly.

"I do not," he answered quickly. "I should say it was the work of some mischievous, ill-natured person, or——"

"Or what, sir?" she asked eagerly.

"Or was done by the orders of Mistress Dorothy herself."

Mrs. Pugh shook her head and sighed. Her experience of matrimony had taught her that it was never wise to argue with a man. The conviction in her own mind remained unshaken, despite her guest's opinion; so she deemed it best to retreat and leave him to his own view of the subject, and with an elaborate curtsy she withdrew, leaving Marston Dare to the solitude of the best parlour and the comfort of a cigar.

He threw open the window and drew the most comfortable chair he could find up to it, and sat there watching the pale rings of smoke float out to the quiet night.

"Strange," he thought to himself, "strange, to come to an out-of-the-world corner like this, and find myself beset by two disturbing reflections as soon as I arrive! I wonder why that story has taken such hold on me. It is not half so singular a one, after all, as many I have read, or

imagined for my books, and yet I can't forget it. Poor, pretty Mistress Dorothy! I wonder what type of woman she was? Something far different, no doubt, to my Lady Lynne. My Lady Lynne! To-day I wondered that I could have cared for her. Cared! It was not that—it was a slavish worship of her beauty that held me to her side. But the beauty cannot charm me now that I know the false soul beneath. Pshaw! she is not worth even a thought. I will go to bed, and sleep, and—forget!"

He threw away the burnt-out cigar, lit his candle, and went up to his room.

The long journey had fatigued him. The emotional excitement he had experienced, at sight of the woman who had been so dear to him once, now revenged itself on his physical weakness for its previous stern repression. A pale haggard face looked back to him from the glass on his toilet-table, and almost startled him in its unlikeness to what it had been a year ago.

"No wonder that I lost her love," he said bitterly. "What a very plain ungilded pill to offer her dainty ladyship. And yet, if she had loved me——"

He cut short the thought with a contemptuous laugh.

"Shall I dream to-night?" he muttered, as he blew out the candle, and took one last look at the sloping hills, above which the young moon sailed in tender beauty. From there his eyes turned to the church, standing dusk and solemn above the village street. He could see the dark yew-trees and the low red wall, and the great oak that sheltered that quiet corner with its mystery and its sorrows, crowned by the disfigured cross.

He dropped the blind abruptly. It seemed almost as if he saw before him the gleaming marble, and the black letters, and the long dark mark that blotted out the name of Anthony Hurst. His last thought, ere sleep sealed his tired eyes and brain, was of the woman whose history he had first traced in that brief record, "Dorothy, wife of ——"

CHAPTER III.

Veiled loves that shifted shapes and shafts, and gave
Laughing, strange gifts to hands that durst not crave.

DAY after day drifted on, and the glory of the springtime lay on field and meadow, and wooed the tender buds and blossoms into life, and the dreamy delicious monotony of the days as they came and went,

seemed to lull Marston Dare into a restful content.

He was too true a lover of Nature not to be charmed with the surroundings whither chance had led him, and he grew to love this quiet nook, shut in by hills and dark with woods, and sweet with all the scents of springtime.

"Why should I not stay here for a time?" he thought to himself. "I can work as well here as in London."

The idea took root in his mind and pleased him. He thought he would see about putting it into execution. He would give up his rooms in town, he would——

A sudden thought arrested him. He remembered what Lady Lynne had said about one of her husband's country-seats being in the neighbourhood. They might meet—in all probability they would meet. What would she think? Naturally that it was for her sake he was remaining. He did not feel inclined to minister to her vanity, nor did he desire to renew the old intimacy, whose results had been so disastrous. Yet, on the other hand, why should he sacrifice himself for her sake? Why turn his back on a spot that had chained his fancy and soothed his restless nature, simply because there was a chance of meeting the woman who had almost broken his heart once?

That time seemed far away now—far away, as he looked at his changed face, and thought of his changed feelings.

He said to himself: "There is no fear now—I am cured." And he was right.

Acting upon that belief, and the growing attraction that this place had for him, he hesitated no longer. He gave up his London rooms and took two at a farmhouse he had discovered in one of his rambles.

It was a roomy picturesque old place; one part of the grounds sloped down to the river; and, as the farmer had a boat, he was able to make long excursions by water as well as by land. The place had another interest for him also. It almost touched the borders of Weirhurst, and through the thickly-grown trees he could catch a glimpse of the old house with its quaint, red-tiled roof and ivy-covered gables.

It interested him strangely, this spot, where that sad little romance had had its birth and death. His thoughts were for ever speculating on Mistress Dorothy. But the old house betrayed no signs of life, nor did he ever see a living creature in the grounds. It seemed given over to the

desolation of age and death. He questioned the old farmer and his wife about the inmates of Weirhurst, but learnt little more than the landlady of The Nelson had told him. The solitary old lady lived there still—seeing no one, going nowhere, and attended only by two old and faithful servants, who had lived there from the time of their youth. With this information he had to be content. He wondered sometimes that he was not content; that his always restless mind had fixed itself with strange pertinacity on the mystery of the tombstone, and, travelling from thence, dwelt with daily increasing interest on the gloomy old house with which that mystery was concerned. He could not account for the interest, but there it was.

Like many of those psychological problems which defy reason, yet seem to take stronger root in the mind by force of that very defiance, this problem puzzled and haunted Marston Dare. He never looked at the house, with the dense shadows of the woods covering it in so jealously, but he thought also of that evening in the churchyard, and saw again that mutilated inscription. He never floated idly in his boat beneath the drooping willows that fringed the Weirhurst grounds, but he found himself wondering and wondering about the young sad life of the girl whose home had been there.

He grew a little intolerant at last of the persistence with which this fancy haunted him. He told himself it was a sign of weakness—of want of tone, of mental depression. He tried to shake it off by reading, by exercise, by return to his literary labours.

In vain.

Try as he might he could not forget the history he had heard, or prevent himself from haunting the grounds of Weirhurst.

He gave up the effort at last. He found it too hopeless to combat. He formed instead a new resolve. He would try and fathom the mystery of the tombstone for himself. He would discover why the dead wife had disowned the name of the living husband.

He formed the resolution suddenly and decidedly; he formed it, and with it came no terror of fear, no warning of what that decision might bring to him as he groped his way along the road that led to the mystery.

A week previously he had known nothing of the woman whose history he had determined to fathom—nothing of the

character, or story, or object, all of which had leaped into living reality before him—nothing of the shadowy presence which seemed to beckon him through a sea of fathomless mystery to some far-off shore, where he would find—what?

The first thing to be done, he told himself, was to get speech of one of the inmates of Weirhurst itself. From all he could ascertain there were three—the old maiden lady, who was its owner, and the two servants who attended on her.

Servants as a rule are easily managed. Bribery goes a long way as a persuasive to confidence.

Should he try bribery?

There seemed something mean in the idea as he looked at the stately, solitary old place. He dismissed the thought reluctantly. There was another course to be followed. He might go straight to the fountain-head. He might call on Miss Clyffe herself. True, he would require an excuse, but he had already framed several. From Miss Clyffe he might gain some clue to the mystery. She was old, and doubtless timid and easily persuaded.

At this juncture a sudden qualm of conscience interposed. It looked to him somewhat ignoble to descend to treachery and subterfuge only for the purpose of satisfying his own idle curiosity. What concern of his was this mystery, or why should he seek to push his way into a family secret?

That was just the question he could not answer; it only brought him back to the starting-point from whence that curiosity sprang, only showed him through its unreasoning motives a strange set purpose he could not disguise or resist. In after years he could look back upon this time with a wonderalmost fearful, and could see in these fancies and impressions a purpose resolute and defined. He could trace in that self-imposed task the finger of Fate, and see it pointing relentlessly on—on—to the shadowy future—on through doubt, fear, pain, joy, and treachery—on to that brighter and fairer day which spoke out the truth at last.

While Marston Dare was arguing in his own mind the various pretexts by which he could procure an introduction to Weirhurst, he was walking along a somewhat unfrequented road, and one which he had never yet travelled. In this new and absorbing interest which had taken possession of him, he had completely forgotten his chances of another rencontre with Lady

Lynne. It was brought suddenly before him, however, by the appearance of that very personage. She was driving a low basket-carriage, and checked her ponies immediately at sight of him.

Politeness compelled him to speak to her, and her interest and wonder in his prolonged stay roused some secret amusement in his mind.

"I am bent on a very unpleasant mission," she said presently. "Sir Andrew has learnt through some secret source that Weirhurst is in the market, and he wants to purchase it. He has commissioned me to call on the old lady who lives there, and make her a private offer. I don't like the task. I believe she is half-mad, or——"

The abrupt stop and the change in her voice were occasioned by the sudden alteration in Marston Dare's listless face and manner. He raised his head; his eyes grew bright and anxious; a sudden flush dyed his brow.

"You are going to—Weirhurst?" he said.

"Yes; is there anything very wonderful in that?" she answered slowly, and looking searchingly at him. "Do you know Miss Clyffe?"

"No," he said abruptly. "But—but I have a great desire to see Weirhurst. It is a—somewhat remarkable place, is it not?"

He was conscious of the lameness of his excuse even before her light laugh fell on his ear.

"Remarkable? Well, if dust, and cobwebs, and neglect are remarkable, it certainly can boast of possessing them. I never heard of any other claim to interest in the old ramshackle place."

"It is not everyone," said Marston Dare pointedly, "who finds interest in red bricks, and modern artifices of floriculture."

As Lynne Court was of the most modern fashion the shot told. The beautiful mistress blushed hotly, and looked indignation personified, but the calm imperturbable face beside her never changed. She began to wonder if she were mistaken—perhaps the shot had only been a random one.

"And so you are anxious to see Weirhurst?" she resumed.

Something in her glance, in her tone, told him his wish might be gratified by a word. Something also in that glance told of danger lurking in his consent, warned him from using as a tool the woman who

had once been queen and mistress of his heart.

To the warning he gave no heed; to the temptation of setting at rest his doubts—of making at least one step forward on the road marked out by his own will—he listened.

His eyes met hers, and saw them sink before his own, but now no throb of heart, no quickening of pulse, no thrill of joy, responded to that sign of tenderness.

"Yes, most anxious," he said quickly.

She moved a little on one side, and pointed to the vacant seat.

"Will you come with—me?" she said softly.

An instant's hesitation—a struggle with himself, but then the purpose he had resolved to follow set aside all scruples as it had set aside all attempts at reason.

"Yes, if you will allow me," he said calmly.

CHAPTER IV.

For the old love's love-sake dead and buried . . .

THEY drove along almost in silence. Lady Lynne was not in the least troubled with scruples. She did not care who saw her with this man, but she did care and would have given a great deal to know his motives for accompanying her.

And yet what motive could there be, she told herself—but one?

He could not forget her. Her power was unchanged, and a thrill of guilty triumph ran through her veins as she stole a lingering glance at the pale, grave face by her side.

He seemed somewhat absent. His eyes looked straight before him, in an absorbed, dreamy fashion, that might, or might not, be flattering to herself. She chose to think it was.

As they reached the gates of Weirhurst, and he sprang out to hold them open for her, she noted a change in his face that surprised her. For an instant he stood there half in, half out of the entrance, looking up the gloomy, grass-grown avenue as if debating some question with himself.

She checked the ponies, and looked back at him. "Are you not coming?" she asked in wonder.

Her voice seemed to rouse him. He let the gate fall back, and once more took his seat in the pony-carriage.

"How strange you looked," she said laughingly. "What were you debating with yourself all that time? The question of propriety?"

"Yes," he said with an odd little smile. "What else could it have been?"

"And you have decided in my favour?"

Her voice was very soft and low, but he caught only the sense of the words—his ears were deaf now to gradations of tone.

"In your favour," he echoed somewhat abruptly. "Oh yes, of course."

They were soon at the house, and she drew up the ponies abruptly. The place looked desolate in the extreme. The walks were neglected, the lawn had long been unmann, and everywhere the dense growth of trees darkened and shut out all brightness or life, like a wall of silence.

As he rang the bell it sounded strangely harsh and loud. The summons was answered by an old white-haired woman. It seemed to Marston Dare that she looked more terrified than startled by the advent of visitors.

He asked her quietly if her mistress was at home.

"My mistress sees no one," she answered, glancing nervously from his face to the figure seated in the pony-carriage. "She is a great invalid."

"But this is a matter of importance," said Dare, staying Lady Lynne's words with a glance. "I think your mistress would make an exception in favour of this lady. Will you take in her card and see?"

He handed in the morsel of cardboard which Lady Lynne gave him.

"Say the call is connected with Weirhurst," he added.

The old woman took the card with evident reluctance, and leaving the door ajar, she went back into the house.

"Ugh! what a place. It is like a graveyard," said Lady Lynne with a shiver. "I am sorry I came. I dare say the old lady won't see me either. She is insolent or eccentric enough for anything."

Her companion was silent. His ears were strained, and his heart was beating with an anxiety that astonished himself. Would they be admitted?

Slowly and heavily the footsteps had retreated, slowly and heavily they echoed back, as if that same reluctance weighted them.

The door was opened a little wider. "My mistress will see the lady," said the woman grimly.

Marston Dare started. It was not the consent that surprised him, it was the check to himself. He was evidently not expected to enter the mysterious mansion also. To all intents and purposes he was

as far off as ever from the object he had in view.

Lady Lynne, however, rose to the occasion in a manner that did her credit.

"Is there no one who can hold my ponies?" she said so haughtily, that the woman, mindful, perhaps, of better days, and what was due to rank and station, muttered a hasty apology, and summoned her husband.

A man, grey and ancient as herself, hobbled into sight, and stood at the ponies' heads. Then Lady Lynne made a sign to Dare to follow her, and they entered the gloomy old house. The hall was very dark, and the room opening out of it, and into which they were conducted, was just as dark, for the blinds were drawn as if to keep out the sunlight, and hangings and furniture were alike of the most sombre hue. Seated by the fireplace, with her back to the light, and shrouded, so it seemed, in nun-like draperies, was the figure of a woman.

It was some time before Marston Dare's eyes grew accustomed to the obscurity, but when they did, he only saw a pale face, framed in by bands of snowy hair, and surmounted by some arrangement of cloudy black lace that effectually disguised both head and features. The hands, that were folded on her lap, were covered with mittens, and his eyes, as they wandered from the shrouded face to the shrouded hands, noted that the fingers were beautifully white and slender, and that they clasped and unclasped each other nervously as she spoke.

She made no attempt to rise at their entrance, only bowed in stately and somewhat distant fashion, and glanced at the card in her hand as if awaiting explanation.

Lady Lynne looked somewhat embarrassed.

"Miss Clyffe, I presume?" she interrogated.

Another bow answered in the affirmative.

Lady Lynne resented the strange reception by assuming her haughtiest and most freezing manner. She stated the reason for her call in as few words as possible, and to Marston Dare her tone seemed almost insolent.

The old lady's eyes were concealed by spectacles; she never once raised them to her visitor's face; only the slender fingers clasped and unclasped themselves from time to time. Dare felt indignant at his

companion's manner—doubly indignant, because he feared that only stress of poverty was inducing the old lady to part with her home, and he felt instinctively that she was suffering pain and humiliation at this cool bargaining. He interposed now between Lady Lynne's explanation and the answer it required. He explained the matter in words more delicate, and infinitely more explicit. Miss Clyffe listened to him as she had done to her other visitor, only, as his voice ceased, she gave one quick glance at his face, and her own seemed warmed by a faint flush, it might have been of anger, or surprise, or indignation. Marston Dare could not tell.

"Your husband, I presume?" she said, turning her head in the direction of Lady Lynne.

The surprise of her words was not so great or so embarrassing to Marston Dare as the sound of her voice. It was a singular voice, very low, very sad, and her words dropped in a slow deliberate fashion that told of great self-restraint, or—

That other suggestion, flashing in swift startling fashion to Marston Dare's brain, held him almost breathless for an instant. In that instant Lady Lynne's crimson face had been averted—it was her voice that roused him.

"Oh no, only a friend staying in the village."

"You are staying in the village," said the old lady in the same deliberate manner. "You are a stranger here then?"

"Yes," he answered quickly, and trying in vain to meet her eyes.

"Do you stay long?" she asked again.

This curiosity as to himself, and the complete ignoring of Lady Lynne's explanation of her visit, struck Dare as being very strange.

But everything around and about Weirhurst was that. Why should he expect the mistress to be different from her surroundings?

"I am thinking of staying all the summer," he said quietly. "The place is beautiful, and it interests me."

"I should not have thought there was much to interest any stranger in Weirhurst or its neighbourhood," she said. Her voice was less deliberate. To Dare it seemed as if the low, even tones were shaken and unsteady. Yet what had he said to agitate her?

An impatient movement from Lady

Lynne recalled him to the object of their visit.

"Am I at liberty to inform Sir Andrew that you accept his offer?" she asked haughtily.

The old lady started as if her thoughts were far away from the subject.

"I—I scarcely know. I mean I must have time to consider," she said hesitatingly.

Lady Lynne looked at her with sublime contempt.

"We have no wish to hurry you," she said coolly, "only Sir Andrew thought that it might be more agreeable to settle the matter privately, and I scarcely fancy you will better his offer."

At the insolent words Marston Dare's eyes flashed with indignation. He felt he hated the one woman as much as he pitied the other. As he looked at that "other," he saw a scarlet flush leap from chin to brow, he saw the head draw itself up in sudden stately pride, and over the quiet face glowed a defiance beyond all words.

But sudden as was the change, sudden also was its suppression. With a quiet bow the mistress of Weirhurst laid her hand on the bell, and dismissed her visitors by two words—"Good-morning."

Marston Dare followed his companion to the door, more enraged and indignant than he had ever felt in his life. Whatever hopes he had cherished, whatever object he had set before him as he obeyed the impulse that had bid him accompany Lady Lynne, he knew that he had gained neither—that he left Weirhurst more dissatisfied, more bewildered than he had entered it.

In silence he took his seat and dropped a crown into the palm of the grey old servitor; in silence he listened to his companion's indignant complaints of incivility; in silence he opened the gates and saw the carriage pass through and on to the shady road beyond.

Then he raised his hat, and echoing only the two words that had spoken their recent dismissal, he turned on his heel and walked across a field that skirted the woods of Weirhurst, leaving his companion gazing after him in astonishment.

"He has gone crazy, surely," she exclaimed, watching with angry eyes the retreating figure. "The air of that place must have affected his brain."

Perhaps it had.

In any case he felt that her presence maddened him at that moment, and without excuse or warning he left her.

It was early noon when Marston Dare quitted Weirhurst; it was late evening when he once again found himself haunting its precincts. He had taken the little boat and rowed down to that part of the grounds which bordered on the river.

The air was very still; the sky held all the pale rose and primrose tints of fading sunset.

Under the drooping willow-boughs it was dark almost as night, and Dare ceased rowing, and fastening his boat to an overhanging branch, leant idly back, looking up through the thick plantation that hid the house.

Now that he could look calmly back on the events of the morning and weigh the impulse that had sent him to Weirhurst, his action looked somewhat irrational. What had he expected to gain? He could not tell. What had he gained? Simply nothing.

The little boat lay idly in the shadows, and the eyes of its occupant wandered as idly over the shining waters and turned from thence to the half-hidden path which the trees seemed doing their best to hide. Suddenly their glance was arrested by some movement beyond. Dare could not quite say what it was; it might have been the flutter of a garment. He at first had thought so, but it disappeared so rapidly that he could not be sure. His eyes, now intent and anxious, watched the path with a new interest. Again, and nearer now, came the same flutter among the shrouding leaves; dim as was the light, Dare could see a figure walking rapidly along—a woman's figure in draperies of flowing black; a figure with nothing of the decrepitude of age in its rapid movements, and yet one that bore some strange resemblance to that of the woman whom he had seen that morning in the old oak parlour at Weirhurst.

Startled and breathless Dare leant forward. The branches hid him from sight; the unconscious figure came on, unwitting that the solitude of this most solitary place held an intruder. On, still on, and Dare saw that his surmise had been correct. The form and figure were those of Mistress Clyffe. He saw the white hair, the shrouding laces; but he saw too with a thrill of something like fear, that while the woman in the parlour had borne every appearance of extreme age, this woman, who bore her likeness, had yet no resemblance to the feeble and decrepit figure he remembered. The walk, the

rapid movements, the gestures which dashed stormily aside every obstacle made by clinging creeper, or outstretched bough, were those of youth.

Youth! And yet from all accounts the mistress of Weirhurst must be full three-score years. The woman he had taken for the mistress of Weirhurst that morning had been so to all appearance. Who, then, was this?

Her rapid movements had brought her close to the river, before his startled senses had fully grasped the fact of her identity.

Keeping perfectly still he watched her with an intentness that took in every detail of her face and figure, and—disguise. Yes, disguise; for, with the rapidity of lightning, the truth rushed to his mind. There must be two inmates of Weirhurst, and one of these evidently concealed her existence and her name for some purpose of her own.

Had that concealment anything to do with the mystery of the tombstone? Had it—? He paused. The woman was still standing looking at the river. The sombre figure, the gleam of the white hair, had in them something weird and strange that repelled—chilled—and yet attracted him.

For an instant looking at the silent woman with her pale set face and down-cast eyes, he thought of Mrs. Pugh's words: "No mortal hand struck out that name, 'twas Mistress Dorothy's ghost."

A little chill wind crept up, and along the banks, and rustled among the willow-boughs with an eerie, mournful sound. The chill seemed to steal into Marston Dare's veins. He shuddered and drew his hand across his eyes. When his hand dropped—when he looked again at the spot where the woman had stood, no one was there.

Too startled by that sudden disappearance to move or utter a sound, Marston Dare remained staring in a bewilderment that was almost ludicrous. As soon as he came to himself he released his boat, and with a few rapid strokes reached the place.

No one was there. No sign of human presence or of human life. No sound of retreating feet—nothing but the faint sigh of the wind, and the plash of the water against the bank.

"Am I dreaming—or mad?" he muttered to himself.

He could not shake off this strange feeling, that was not fear, and yet not fearless; he could not forget that sombre figure, that white, wild face looking down into the

dark waters. Sceptic as he was in all matters supernatural, there was something about this meeting that awed and puzzled him.

Rousing himself at last he took his way homewards. The mystery was deepening, but more than ever did he resolve to fathom it. The idea that had flashed into his mind as he saw that second woman with her likeness to the first, only deepened and strengthened the more he thought of it.

"I shall find it out if I stay here all my life," he muttered with the firmness of baffled reason, and the doggedness of a sure resolve.

All his life!

Ah, one day how those words would haunt him, how their bitterness and impotence would mock the strength that now he thought so sure!

CHAPTER V.

Born out of hope toward what shall yet be done,
Ere hate or love remember or forget.

A FEW days passed on uneventfully.

Lady Lynne had apparently been forgiving enough to excuse Dare's rudeness at their last meeting, for she sent him an invitation to dinner, and he, from sheer want of a feasible excuse, accepted it. Besides, he wanted to hear if there had been any further negotiations respecting Weirhurst.

He therefore went to the red-brick, pretentious-looking structure which Lady Lynne had termed "one of Sir Andrew's places," and was regaled with a magnificence that amused, but failed to impress him at all favourably with the giver of the feast.

It was all show, and glitter, and hollowness, he felt. Sir Andrew was a short, stout, loud-voiced man, one of that new order of knights, who gain their honours from amazing wealth, or force of circumstance. He had a vast notion of the power of money, and but a poor opinion of people who devoted their brains to any other object than that of amassing it. However, there was little in common between himself and his guest.

When the long, stately meal was over, Lady Lynne played and sang to them in the great glittering drawing-room. Her guest listened abstractedly—her husband dozed in his chair. At last she left the piano and came over to one of the windows opening on the terrace.

"Would you like to come out?" she asked her guest.

He answered readily in the affirmative. She caught up some light fleecy shawl lying on one of the lounges, and throwing it over her head and shoulders, stepped out on to the terrace with him.

The night was balmy as summer. The moon gleamed like silver over the trees and smooth green leaves and quaint flower-beds. It was a time and season for sentiment had Marston Dare been disposed for it, but he was not. Every time he saw this woman he grew more and more disenchanted. He began to see, like most people, that sublime as love is, it is a very blindfolding passion after all.

Yet there is something pathetic about that very blindness. With what simplicity and faith we worship our clay idols, believing them to be the very purest gold. The wisest and best of us are helpless at such times, nor can argument or reason assure us of our own amazing folly.

In vain Lady Lynne laid traps for tender reminiscences—in vain her voice sank to its sweetest and most seductive tones. The man by her side was proof against all her wiles. He felt cold and untouched now, and marvelled at himself.

It was with some difficulty he approached the real object of his visit, for he had to bear with Lady Lynne's reproaches at his desertion of her on that morning, and invent excuses for it. He learnt at last, however, that nothing had yet been settled. Miss Clyffe was ill, and could not make up her mind as to whether she would part with it or not. He felt reassured by this information. Perhaps he showed his relief in some way, for Lady Lynne said laughingly:

"One would think there was some beautiful damsel immured in that dreary old habitation, you take such an interest in it."

On his way home he thought of those words, and thought, too, how strangely they fitted in with that dim suspicion floating in his mind.

He had insisted on walking, despite all offers of a conveyance on the part of his host and hostess.

The cool air refreshed him; the scents of the flowering hedgerows and fragrant meadows seemed strangely sweet.

One night Dare shut up his books and left the farm for a stroll. He had been working hard, and felt disinclined for bed. He looked at his watch; it was half-past eleven.

"I should have time to walk to the

village," he thought, and then wondered why he had thought it.

He walked on. Though he had said "the village," he knew it was not only to the village his mind led the way, and his feet were speeding. He knew even before the old grey church met his eyes, standing silent as the silent night, with its dark square tower outlined against the quiet sky. He had unlatched the gate and walked across the soft greensward ere ever he asked himself what purpose had led him here. The sloping path by which he entered faced the entrance to the church. From where he stood, half the churchyard only was in view. The other half—where lay that mysterious grave—was not visible unless he walked round the church. He stood for a moment, looking, as once before he had looked, at the quiet village, the sloping hills, the dark curve of the woods.

A cloud obscured the moon, and for a moment or two the whole place lay in shadow. It was at that moment that the clock in the tower struck the hour of midnight.

As the last stroke echoed dull and long over the stillness which reigned in that region of death, Marston Dare stepped out from the shadow, and skirting the church, found himself facing the spot he knew so well, and which held for him so strange an attraction.

The moon was still hidden, and the old oak boughs spread themselves in sheltering care over the marble cross. Between him and it lay a gravel path, and beyond that path, and bending over the grave, was—A shadow? No, not a shadow. At first he had thought so, as he had stopped, startled and dismayed. But he saw it was a woman's figure—a black, motionless form, with face turned from him—the figure of a woman, alone and unprotected, standing here at this lonely midnight hour beside this lonely grave.

Gifted with nerves as strong as most men possess, yet Dare felt a strange shuddering awe creep over him as he stood and watched her.

For the life of him he could not move a step forward. It seemed as if the very springs of his life were chilled by this fear—this expectance of something—he could not tell what. He only knew he stood there waiting—waiting for what seemed to him long hours of strange and chill dismay.

The woman had her back turned to him. His footsteps had made no sound on the

soft turf. She was quite unconscious that she was not alone. Suddenly a low half-stifled cry escaped her; she sank upon her knees beside the grave, and laid her head on the turf that covered it.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" she wailed. "Oh, to be at rest with you—to be at rest with you!"

The cry faltered and sank low; but, distressing as it was, it came like an absolute relief to Marston Dare. It seemed to release him from that paralysis of thought and action, which had held him chained inertly by the ivied wall.

He crossed the space; he reached the grave; he neared the crouching figure, with its downcast head and sweeping sombre garments. But then he stopped, arrested less by that low faint cry of deadly terror than by sight of the face uplifted to him in its ghastly fear in the white gleaming moonlight.

He knew then what his suspicion had been. He knew then how far he had followed it. But he had never dreamed how base and unmanly a thing it would look, even in his own sight, till he saw the fear change to defiance in those dark startled eyes—till he found himself confronted by a woman like and yet unlike the woman he had thought to find.

"What do you want?" she asked abruptly.

The question was so unexpected, so unanswerable, that he only stood there looking at her in bewildered silence.

"I—I beg your pardon for disturbing you," he stammered at last. The sound of his voice gave him courage. "The churchyard is free to all, I believe," he added.

"At this time, at this hour," she muttered. "You—you came here with some purpose. You followed me."

"Why should you think I am a spy?" he asked gently.

He was looking at her in ever-increasing wonder—wonder at the beauty of the white wasted face, so young and yet so sorrowful; wonder at the dainty, slender stature, the great, frightened, sombre eyes. Who was she?

Her glance fell. Her fingers trembled as she clasped them together; her breath came and went in stormy pants that bespoke terrible agitation.

That fear appealed to all that was noblest and manliest in Marston Dare. He put aside his intense curiosity, he crushed his voice to a quietness and composure

that surprised even himself and insensibly quieted her.

"I regret that I have startled you," he said. "The night was so warm and fine it tempted me to take a stroll. This churchyard is a favourite place of mine. I came here. That is all my explanation."

"A singular taste to come to a churchyard at midnight," she said.

"Yet a taste you seem to share in common with myself."

Her eyes looked down at the grave at her feet.

"Someone I loved very dearly is buried there," she said simply.

Dare started visibly.

Did she mean—was it really Dorothy Clyffe who lay there under the sod? or was this neither the woman he had supposed, nor the ostensible mistress of Weirhurst?

Her eyes travelled back from the grave to his face, and rested there earnestly and long.

"You are quite a stranger here, I think you said?" she murmured dreamily.

He had not said it to her, so he supposed, but he did not deny the fact. He assented to it, and added something of the interest awakened in him by the inscription on the tombstone whose secret she shared.

As he mentioned it a scarlet flush burned in her face, making it young and beautiful as a girl's.

"You thought it strange," she echoed nervously, twisting and untwisting the fingers of her ungloved hands as she spoke. "Why should you?"

"It must appear singular, you will admit, that an inscription to a wife's memory should have her husband's name struck out, and that the mystery has never been solved," he answered.

A little bitter laugh left her lips. She gathered up her cloudy draperies, and turned as if to go.

"May I not see you on your way?" pleaded Dare eagerly. "The hour is very late and the roads lonely."

"I am not afraid of late hours or lonely roads," she said mournfully. "No one molests the—dead."

"The dead!" he echoed. And again that chill and tremor crept over his frame, and he thought of the mysterious figure he had seen by the river-bank.

His words seemed to shock her. She hesitated and looked back.

"Did I say that?" she asked timidly.

"I forgot. I am so much alone; I am not used to strangers. But you—oh, sir, you look kind! You look as if a woman might trust you. Don't force yourself on me; don't follow me; don't"—and she came near and laid her cold hands on his arm, "don't tell any one you have seen me. Promise that."

"I promise you," he answered slowly. "I promise you all the more readily because I have not the faintest idea myself whom—I—have—seen."

She drew a sudden quick breath of relief. Her eyes looked up to him gratefully, wonderingly, and was it regretfully? He almost thought so.

"I—I think I can trust you," she said softly.

For all answer he laid his hand upon the marble cross by which they stood.

"I swear by this," he said solemnly, "by this memory of—Dorothy Clyffe—that I will never reveal what I have learnt to-night until she permits."

"Until—she—permits," faltered his companion. "Do you forget? Do you not know that Dorothy Clyffe is——"

"Hush!" he said solemnly. "What others believe has nothing to do with us from this night forth. I know, and so do you, that for some reason of her own she has died to the world, to her friends, to her husband."

A low wild cry cut short his words.

"You know—you know!" she gasped, and sank at his feet and hid her face in her shuddering hands—down, down upon the dewy turf that told to all the world—a lie!

CHAPTER VI.

As love might rule over death.

THE old church clock had struck the hour of midnight as Marston Dare stepped out from the shadows and stood beside the mysterious grave. The same clock struck the first hour of a new day as he left the churchyard with the woman, whom by that grave he had met.

He had entered that churchyard with no very definite purpose, and with an unreasonable curiosity burning in his veins; he left it with a life changed and set to one end. And yet he knew that to explain this change in himself would have been well-nigh impossible. Even to his own mind it looked quixotic, foolish, unnecessary, but the bias of the mind is an argument in itself, and one strong enough, as a rule, to overthrow all the rules of logic. He had

not been able to reason himself out of that resolve to fathom the mystery of the tombstone. He was not able to reason himself out of this determination to guard the secret and protect the life of the woman whose story had been told to him by her own lips, beside her own grave.

His own suspicions had been far enough from the reality; his own idea had been that Dorothy Clyffe was living at Weirhurst, under the protection of her aunt. But he had learnt from Dorothy Clyffe's own lips that she had simply changed places with the supposed mistress of Weirhurst. While Alice Dorothy Clyffe, the aunt, lay buried under the oak shadows, Dorothy Clyffe, the niece, had assumed her identity, and was living at the old house unsuspected and unknown save by the two old faithful servants who shared and preserved her secret.

And the reason?

Ah! That reason it was, with its strange history of shame and sorrow and despair, that had aroused in Marston Dare's breast an indignation so fierce, a chivalry so ardent, a pity so great, for this friendless, lonely woman.

He had looked at the worn face, with all its lovely youth stamped by sorrow and suffering. He had heard the broken voice, sweet as no woman's voice had ever seemed to him, breathing out its tale of wrong, its burden of dread, and he had been ready enough to acknowledge that her concealment and deception had been after all but an outcome of fear that had snatched at any excuse for safety. In her own words the story had reached his ears—in her own words it lives on these pages.

"Don't betray me," she had gasped when the terrible fear of his words had struck her almost senseless at his feet. "Oh, don't—don't betray me. I don't know who you are. I don't know how you came to know me, but promise me you won't give me up to him. I would sooner face death—nay, I would sooner force death than live through such days as those from which—this—saved me."

She pointed to the cross by which they stood, and great tears gathered in her eyes and fell one by one down the white wasted cheeks. Those tears unmanned Dare. He could not bear the sight of her weakness—her distress. He besought her to say no more, to believe that her secret was safe with him; but she checked her emotion, and wiped the tears from her eyes, and facing him there, with her hand

on the marble cross, told him the story of her ruined life.

"If you have heard of me at all," she said, "you have heard of my marriage—my grand marriage, but you could never have heard how in one year of that life I grew to envy the poorest, weariest creature begging her bread in the London streets, who was free. I married, believing myself in love, ready to give duty, honour, reverence, to the man I called husband. I found—oh, Heaven, pardon him!—I found myself tied to a drunkard, a *roué*, a man with a life of vice behind him which he unfolded triumphantly before my shrinking eyes—with neither self-respect, nor honour, nor conscience, and this man!—I, a girl of seventeen, reared in country innocence, and purity, and simplicity—this man I was bound to live with for life.

"I cannot tell you—I could not even tell myself now—what those two years of marriage were to me. I felt myself steeped in moral degradation. I grew to abhor myself as well as the man to whose brief passion I owed my position. In a month he had wearied of me—in a month I was no more to him than any of the poor victims whose hearts and lives he had ruined. I kept my misery to myself. My aunts believed me happy. It would have broken their tender hearts to know the truth. At last I think I was well-nigh mad. Mind and body were giving way beneath the strain. I was not a woman of the world, remember. I knew absolutely nothing of life and its sins and follies and recklessness—such life as was daily before my eyes. We were constantly travelling about, sometimes in Paris, sometimes in Vienna, sometimes in Rome, sometimes in London. It was in Rome, I think, that the knowledge of my real position burst upon me, that the baseness and treachery of Anthony Hurst was revealed. It was winter, and the city was very gay, and my husband was always away from home, and rarely if ever took me with him. Rumours reached me sometimes of some beautiful foreign woman with whom he was always seen, but I cared little for that; I dreaded his presence, and was almost thankful for any attraction that left me free from his brutality and insults. But one day, without word or warning, he left Rome and he left me.

"I think I went mad for a time. I know I dismissed my servants, and took what money there was left, and came alone,

unprotected, back to England, nor ever rested, day or night, till I found myself once more in my childhood's home. But that was changed too, and only one face and voice greeted me, instead of the two dear ones I had left. Aunt Marian had died, and Aunt Alice was so old and feeble that the shock of seeing me so changed threw her into a dangerous illness. But of that I knew nothing. From the time of my arrival at Weirhurst all is a blank for the space of two weeks. After that I seemed to wake quite suddenly, as one wakes after a very long sleep. It was dusk, I remember, and I lay with my eyes open for some time, trying dreamily to remember where I was. Then a strange sort of oppression seemed to weigh on me. I tried to move my limbs, but they seemed swathed in tight wrappings. A scent of flowers was heavy on the air. My bed—oh, shall I ever forget the horror of that moment!—my bed was so narrow and hard that I could not even turn. With a struggle I raised myself to a sitting position. Opposite me was a mirror, and as I met my own reflection there, I saw a ghastly face bound in strange white folds. I saw the scattered flowers upon my breast fall on the bare oak floor. I saw the face of a living woman looking at me from the coffin where a dead woman had been laid.

"I wonder now I did not die then, in the fear and shock of that discovery. I rose, how I cannot tell; I dragged my feeble limbs across the room. I tore off the hideous bands and folds around my head. I stood there, with my hair streaming wildly round me, and my scared white face looking at me with a horrible unlikeness to the face I knew as mine, and while I so stood the door opened, and on the threshold stood—my aunt.

"Heaven knows what my own fear had been, but what must have been hers! I heard one wild shriek pealing through the silent house, and I caught in my arms the strengthless, lifeless form of the only friend I had in the world.

"Need I say more? Can you guess now the sequel that leads to our meeting to-night; that explains why Dorothy Clyffe lives, yet is to all intents and purposes dead.

"The shock killed my aunt, but it was I who was supposed to be dead; I for whom the certificate had been made out; I who was laid at rest here. When I could

convince the old and terrified servants of my identity, of my being really alive, I heard of my strange illness; of my long insensibility that had been mistaken for death, and of my aunt's grief and despair. And then—then came into my mind the scheme which I have followed. I was believed to be dead. I knew my cruel husband could never molest me more. Do you wonder that I snatched at such a chance? I might live on here as Alice Clyffe, and no one would suspect me. I had simply to disguise myself and dress myself as my aunt; the old servants loved me too well ever to betray my secret, and as Alice Clyffe I have lived unknown and unsuspected up to this time."

Her voice ceased, her story was ended.

In the silence that followed she looked up at her companion's face with sad and pleading eyes.

"Say you are sorry for me; you will be my friend; you will not betray me," she implored, and held out her hands to him.

For all answer he took the small, cold, outstretched hands in his own, and touched them earnestly with his lips.

"I pity you with all my soul," he said.

"Your friend, you said—may I be that?"

"If—if you will," she faltered.

"Thank you," he said simply, and placed the little hand on his arm, and went with her, slowly, reverently, through the quiet paths, while above their heads the morning star shone clear and bright, as the dawn broke over the dusky hills.

A new day was breaking—a new day that marked for Marston Dare a new interest in his hard and lonely life.

CHAPTER VII.

Sweet for a little, even to fear, and sweet,

Oh Love, to lay down fear at Love's fair feet.

MARSTON DARE left his companion at her own gates, but left her after a promise that she would receive him the next day if he called.

He went home then, and let himself into the farmhouse, and threw himself down on his bed in a state of bewilderment that defied all calm consideration.

What had he done? What had he learnt? How had the whole aspect of his life changed so utterly and suddenly?

He thought of that evening when he had wandered idly into the churchyard, when his eyes had rested on that strange inscription. He had not asked his strange companion why she had chosen to deface

the name it bore, but he could guess the reason well enough. Some morbid feeling—some impulsive horror of that printed lie must have seized her, and forced her in an indignant moment to strike out from sight of men the name she hated. Of the risk she ran, the curiosity such an action would excite, she never thought. The one man to whom alone belonged the right of replacing it had treated the matter with utter indifference. The defaced tombstone stood alone, bearing its silent witness to the tale of sorrow and despair that Marston Dare had learnt that night.

In his own mind he never for one instant blamed the woman who had acted thus. Chance had thrown in her way a prospect of release from her bondage. She had seized it, and no living soul ever suspected the truth.

It puzzled Marston Dare not a little why he, a stranger, should have been so interested in it—why he had been so bent on discovering the mystery; why he now felt so strong and tender an interest in this woman's fate, and bound himself to be her friend and protector if needed.

Perhaps that element of romance lurking in his soul which had fashioned him into a novelist and left him half a poet, was to blame. Perhaps the mystery and sadness of this story appealed to him more powerfully than it would have done to a man of more material nature. Perhaps this woman, with her wasted youth, her strange beauty, her tragic history, moved him with a sympathy too deep for words to explain, for thought or pen to reach. He could not explain it to himself, he only knew it was there. Had he been wise he would have known that no interest so powerful or so inexplicable could spring into life at a woman's presence, and there—end. He would have known that such an interest would but gain fresh strength with every day that came, with every night that died. He would have known that the vision of his own fancy and the ideal he had formed for himself in years long past, had sprung into life, a vivid reality. That this presence, mysterious, fateful, unfamiliar as it was, would yet haunt him henceforward, with that strange mingling of pain and sweetness that is all we know of earthly love.

It is the favoured privilege of the historian to skip over years as if their passage were of no account to the dramatis personæ who fill his pages; in like manner it is the privilege of the reader to skip over pages which

appear dry and uninteresting, though the writer may deem them essential.

Consider then that two years have passed since Marston Dare came to the little Shropshire village, and that in those two years he has lingered on in the same place, working hard as one who loves his work and reaps its benefits in fame and success—faithful still to that promise made in the old churchyard—the friend, adviser, and helper of the lonely woman who still lived on at Weirhurst.

He had counselled her not to risk selling the old house, as she had once determined to do. It would court notice; it would necessitate legal proceedings; her disguise might be penetrated; and she, leaning only too willingly on the strength and wits at her service, was guided by his wishes, and remained.

If people gossiped about the strange interest the new comer seemed to feel for the old lady at Weirhurst, or the many times during the course of the week in which he was seen entering or leaving the gates, the gossip never reached him or her.

Those two tranquil happy years were the sweetest her life had known, though they were leading that life on to a sorrow and an evil she never suspected.

There was one person who watched Marston Dare's proceedings, and learnt of his actions, with a jealous and spiteful wonder. The utter indifference displayed to herself had piqued Lady Lynne more than she liked to acknowledge, even to herself.

To find out the reason was a task to which she bent all her energies, and when a woman, and a jealous woman, is bent on such a task, she generally manages to accomplish it.

Her spies told her of Dare's constant visits to Weirhurst. Her own instincts told her that no man would be so zealous and devoted to an old, decrepit, half-mad woman, as she always termed Mistress Alice Clyffe. She determined to watch him, and find out who lived at Weirhurst besides its mistress.

With the fall of the summer dusk, Dare used always to go to the old house. He had become used to dropping in after his day's work was over—used to sitting in the dim oak parlour, or strolling about the quiet glades with this pale-faced, sweet-voiced woman, whom he, unconsciously, had grown to care for beyond and above all other cares and interests of his life. She was unconscious, too, of the feelings she

had awakened. Dear as this friendship was, it yet seemed to her nothing more, for the bondage of her miserable marriage held her in chains too sure for forgetfulness.

One summer night — a night so hot and windless that Dorothy had listened to Dare's persuasions, and come out into the grounds without the usual drapery of lace that veiled her hair and features — the two were strolling together, and directed their steps to the riverside.

It was on this night that Lady Lynne had entered the grounds unobserved, and followed them at a safe distance. Hidden behind the thick screen of bushes, she saw them pause by the shadowed waters where the willows fringed the banks. She heard Dare's voice, low and earnest, telling his companion of that other evening when he had seen her from his boat, and she heard the woman's voice, in its sweet, low accents, replying to him. Still, even then no suspicion of the real truth entered Lady Lynne's mind. She had heard of Dorothy Hurst, but had felt little interest in the tale, and now her idea still was that this was a companion of old Mistress Clyffe, and that Dare was making love to her.

She watched them for some time, and then retreated unobserved, her heart full of rage and bitterness against the woman she deemed her rival.

Her spite took a very foolish form. She wrote an anonymous letter to Mistress Alice Clyffe, informing her of the shameful behaviour of her "companion," who was trying to entrap a gentleman into an undue intimacy, which could bode no good to that bold young damsel.

This letter amazed and frightened Dorothy.

Already something of her long-guarded secret must be known, and this was the result.

She waited in grievous alarm for Dare's usual visit, and then showed him the letter.

He read it straight through without a word, and then —

Well, then, as he turned to her, his face betrayed him.

His secret leapt into life and knowledge, and above and beyond the poor pretence of friendship, each saw and read the truth.

It was a terrible moment — terrible in its pain, its weakness, its desolating fears, its hopeless picture of that long blank future whose every hour would be one of loneliness and dread.

"Heaven help me!" groaned Marston Dare. "In all my thought of you, I never thought of this! My friendship has done you more harm than good."

He crushed the letter in his hand.

"I ought to leave you, and at once," he muttered. "It is the only way I can allay that woman's suspicions."

"You know, then, who has done this?" she questioned eagerly.

A dusky shame-born flush crept over his face. His eyes sank before her own.

"Yes," he said.

There was a long, long silence. He could hear his heart beating stormily and fast; he knew only too well what anguish lay in the thought of that parting he had decreed. She had become so much to him, how could he tear himself from her presence? Was love always to meet him as a foe to combat?

For a brief space some secret and subtle tempting held him there by her side; for a brief space his eyes lingered on her face that of late had grown so beautiful in its serene peace and its new-born happiness. Then she looked up and met his eyes, and in another instant was sobbing on his breast.

"Don't go!" she cried. "Oh, don't go!"

He made no attempt to soothe her; he could not have spoken, so he felt, without adding to her shame, and the burden of misery she already bore.

Only when the sobs ceased, when spent and weak as a child she lay in his arms, did he venture to speak at last.

"My darling," he said sorrowfully. "Is it so much to you?"

His words recalled her to herself, and knowing what was right, she roused herself to meet this new trouble with something of his own brave fortitude.

"I was so friendless," she said sadly, "and I had hoped——"

Again her voice broke. The ordeal was too terrible.

What she had hoped — what she had looked forward to, were things innocent enough, and yet she dared not speak of them now.

Again silence fell upon them. She had sunk into a low chair, but he was still standing, and before them on the dark oak-floor lay the letter which had come to part them.

In the silence during which Dare was fighting out that inward battle which holds

honour for its watch-cry, there came across the still night air a strange dull sound. It was the bell of the old church, and it rang the death-knell of some ended life.

They both started at the sound. Perhaps its warning helped them to that sacrifice which right and duty demanded. Perhaps before the majesty and mystery of death even the anguish of such an hour as this looked less blank, less bitter.

Summoning up all his strength Dare bent towards the slender figure, and touched the trembling hands.

"I can't bear to say good-bye," he whispered hoarsely. "It seems too hard, although the same world holds us both; but I must go now—it is better for both our sakes. I will write to you to-morrow. I will try to think what is best."

His voice broke. He saw the anguish in her tearless eyes, he saw the quiver of the sad young mouth. He caught her to his heart and kissed her with the passion of despair that spoke of an ended hope. Then he left her.

Again and again the death-bell pealed out on the summer air.

Why had he gone to the village? Why had his wild and reckless steps led him to the churchyard? Why did the sullen strokes of that tolling bell madden him as ever and again their echoes fell across the stillness? Marston Dare found himself asking these questions, yet never answering them, hurrying wildly on as if to stifle thought—where, he never looked nor cared.

Yes, he was once more in the old grey churchyard, and once more looking at the gleaming black and white of those fatal letters, and once more asking himself helplessly why he had meddled with Fate, since to mortals Fate is always so cruel and merciless a thing.

He heard steps on the gravel path, and looked round. It was the old sexton leaving the belfry-tower. He saw the quiet figure by the grave, and came forward, touching his hat.

"A sad thing, sir, and suddin," he said, as if taking for granted the stranger's knowledge of his news.

"What is it?" asked Dare mechanically. The springs of his life seemed frozen. Of what interest to him were life, or death, or burial?

"'Tis Sir Anthony Hurst, sir," said the old man. "The news came to-night. He fell over a mountain or glazier, or summat

of that sort, in Switzerland. Was picked up dead. They're sending the body home to be laid here."

The night seemed full of reeling shadows. The silver haze of moonlight turned black before Dare's dizzy eyes. He clutched at the marble cross for support.

The old man passed on unheeding. He had other people to tell the news to, and he was a personage of importance just then.

And Dare, alone and glad-hearted beyond all words, fell on his knees beside that fateful grave, and while tears of joy and thankfulness dimmed his eyes, cried out: "Thank God, she is mine now. Mine, without sin, without fear; never to be lonely or friendless any more."

And the clear, soft moonbeams fell through the old oak boughs, and showed him once again that name, "Dorothy, wife of —."

My readers, can you add the rest?

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

By PAUL BLAKE.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN a young poet has written a song, he takes a keen pleasure in hearing it mentioned by his friends. Should he listen to one of them singing it, he is ready to accept the compliment as a flattering one. But it touches him more nearly, a great deal, if the singer is a stranger.

No wonder, then, that Ellis Field, as he wandered through a deserted portion of Regent's Park one summer afternoon, felt his heart thrill with unaccustomed delight, as he heard a fresh young voice singing softly the words:

Bright shone the sun, 'twas summer weather,
When first we roamed across the heather,
You and I.

The lines formed part of one of his own songs.

The singer was seated on the grass with her back towards Ellis. She did not hear his approach; he hesitated a moment, partly not to interrupt her, partly from the feeling that he would like to hear her sing the rest. Then half involuntarily he joined in the refrain in a low voice.

Not so low but that Carrie Miller turned quickly round, ceasing to sing at the same moment. Ellis found himself nearer to

her than he was aware. He felt in a sufficiently awkward position.

"I beg your pardon," he said, lifting his hat; "I did not mean to interrupt you."

The young lady smiled, there was not a trace of embarrassment visible on her countenance.

"I did not know it was arranged as a duet," she said.

"Yes; it has just been published in both forms."

"Is it? I have only a manuscript copy."

"Will you permit me——?"

Ellis stopped suddenly; he was on the point of asking permission to present her with a printed copy of the song, but it struck him that the terms of their acquaintance scarcely warranted him in making such a request. He wondered at his own audacity; he seemed to be already on intimate terms with this charming young lady. It was almost a shock to recollect that he was a stranger.

"I know what you are going to say," said Miss Miller; "yes, you may let me have a copy if you have one. Mr. Drysdale promised to send me some as soon as they were published. I suppose he has forgotten. It's charming music—isn't it?"

"Very," replied Ellis, more vexed than he cared to confess, that she had confined her eulogy to the music; he envied Drysdale.

"How do you like the words?" he asked.

"Very much; they are really pretty."

"Pretty" was not quite the word Ellis wished for; but, pronounced in a charming way by a pair of rosy lips, it went far to satisfy him.

Before this, Miss Miller had risen, and they were walking slowly together across the grass. She still seemed quite unconscious that there was anything in the slightest degree unusual in her conduct, and Ellis felt very charmed. He congratulated himself on the slight adventure. Whatever might be its upshot, he resolved to enjoy it for the present.

"By the way," continued his companion, "how do you happen to know it so well?"

Ellis looked guilty.

"I know!" she exclaimed with a quick little laugh. "You wrote the words."

"How did you find that out?" he asked wonderingly.

"Instinct, I suppose. Do you think it saw very clever of me?"

"Yes, very, and more than clever—it showed a sympathetic nature."

"Oh no; I'm not in the least poetical," was the reply; "at least, not often, and only when I'm alone, and I don't encourage myself then. I don't think life is very romantic; I find it intensely practical."

"Do you call this part of it romantic or practical?" Ellis asked with a smile.

"Romantic, I suppose, as far as it is either. But romance seems out of place in a London park. I hope I'm not taking you out of your way?" she ended rather suddenly.

"Oh no, not in the least. I have no engagement of any kind, and besides, we are walking towards my rooms. May I accompany you as far as our paths lie together?"

"Oh yes, if you wish; I shall be glad of a companion."

In the mouths of most young ladies this speech would have appeared very forward. Ellis felt that it would have been sufficient to determine him to take another direction very soon. But, as Miss Miller said it, it had a totally opposite effect. There was nothing flattering in her tone; it was simply one of civility and candour.

They walked together for some distance, talking easily and naturally as if they had been acquainted for years.

On coming to a seat near Gloucester Gate, Miss Miller suggested they should rest a few moments.

"This is the last seat we shall pass," she said.

"Don't mention anything that suggests the end of our walk," said Ellis.

"Why not? It must come to an end soon, for I live only five minutes farther."

"It shall last till then, at any rate," was his reply, "if you will allow me to see you home."

"Oh yes, if you like. It is in Fairlight Terrace."

Ellis started slightly.

"We are neighbours in that case," he said; "I live at Number Eight."

It was Miss Miller's turn to be surprised.

"At Number Eight? that is where we live, too."

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed. "I have never seen you before to-day."

"No, I dare say not; we only moved there yesterday. We are on the top floor."

"I am on the ground-floor. May I ask who 'we' are?"

"My sister Florrie and I. She is only a child."

"As we are such near neighbours, I hope we may have the opportunity of meeting frequently," said Ellis, conscious that he was scarcely carrying out his principles on the subject of proper behaviour to unprotected young ladies. But then it was absurd to think of Miss Miller as unprotected. He had not been in her company a minute before he was quite certain that she was well able to take care of herself. He half wished he was equally sure of himself.

"We are sure to see each other sometimes," she remarked. "You are fond of music?"

"Passionately."

"Then you must come up and see us sometimes; we have a piano, and Florrie plays very well indeed for a child."

"And you?"

"I don't play much, I sing. I am studying at present."

Ellis thought he had discovered everything now. His companion must be a musical enthusiast come to London to study, and bold enough to live without a chaperon. Yet it seemed something more than bold to invite a bachelor to come to her rooms. He had not had much experience of Bohemian etiquette, but he could not help thinking that its rules must be considerably more lax than those of society to permit such a proceeding.

"I shall be most happy to hear you sing," he replied, "if——"

"If what?"

Ellis did not like to explain. He wished he had not hinted at the existence of any obstacle. The only way out of the difficulty was to be plain.

"I don't know whether you are aware that I am living by myself."

"I supposed so; what of it?" she asked. "Is there any harm in your coming to see me?"

"Not the least in the world," he replied warmly. "I was only afraid that possibly you might think so."

Miss Miller gave one of her musical little laughs.

"I should not have asked you in that case," she said. "I'm afraid you don't quite understand me yet; you have not had much time, it is true. What do you think I am? I should like to know."

"I think you are a very charming young lady," was Ellis's somewhat gauche reply.

"Thank you, but I didn't mean that. I may as well tell you once for all that pretty speeches are thrown away on me."

"Ah, you hear them so often."

"Yes, and they mean so little."

Ellis was conscious of an annoyance; he did not like to hear her acquiesce so easily in his statement.

"Sometimes they mean something," he said. "Do you never try and distinguish between the true and false in compliments?"

"You are wandering from the point," she replied. "What do you think I am?"

"A young lady who has come to London to study singing."

"As a profession?"

"Possibly."

"You are partly right, but I must correct your statement in one point. I am not a lady."

Ellis was again conscious of a disappointment. He was obliged to confess that he had never known a young lady like Miss Miller, but he was quite willing to include her in the category, even if it necessitated an enlargement of his definition.

He waited for her to go on.

"I am the daughter of a very small boot-maker in the country. I was taught to curtsy to the parson's wife when I was small."

"Birth is not everything," sententially remarked Ellis.

"No, fortunately," was Miss Miller's reply as she gave another little laugh. "I was sent to a good school, and then became nursery-governess at Lord Leveston's; that was when I was fifteen. I was there three years, and I learned a great deal more than I taught. I made friends with the regular governess, who was a Parisian, and she taught me to speak French, and how to dress, and I used to watch the visitors and Lady Leveston till I knew how to behave as well as any of them. Then I had to leave, the children grew too old for me, so I went back to my home."

"That must have been a great change for you," said Ellis, scarcely knowing what to say.

"Much too great to please me. I couldn't stand it. Madame had told me I had a voice and ought to study, so I came to London four months ago."

"I'm sure I hope you will be successful," said Ellis earnestly; "you have great courage to come up to fight your way alone."

"I don't deserve much credit," was the reply; "it would have required much more courage to have stayed at home. Here we are at last."

They had walked together to Fairlight Terrace. Ellis opened the door with his latchkey.

"Will you come into my room, and let me give you a cup of tea?" he asked.

"No, thank you, not now; Florrie is waiting for me upstairs. Don't forget to come and see us soon."

"I am not likely to forget it," was his reply.

"Any afternoon will do. I am always out in the evening. Good-bye."

She held out her daintily-gloved little hand. Ellis pressed it, and a moment afterwards she disappeared up the stairs.

CHAPTER II.

INSTEAD of going into his room, Ellis opened the front door again, and went out. He usually had his dinner at a restaurant in the Euston Road when he happened to be in the neighbourhood; on this occasion he made his way there half-mechanically, not being in the mood to care about thinking where he should go.

The events of the last hour and a half had affected him more than he liked to acknowledge to himself. He was peculiarly susceptible in some points, though he did not pass amongst his friends for a man who cared much for ladies' society. He did not as a rule; the ordinary young lady had small attractions for him. But Miss Miller was very far from being an ordinary young lady, though that alone would not have been sufficient to have caused his present sensations.

"I mustn't be a fool," was the prevailing thought in his mind as he made his way along the far from attractive Hampstead Road; by which he meant that he must not fall in love. Rather a strange resolve for a poet.

After all, the poetic was only one side of his nature; although he had thrown up business, and taken literature as his calling, he was not able to nullify the effects of his education and training. Business has too powerful a hold over those devoted to it for some years, even against their will, to loose its grasp at once. Ellis determined when he became a Bohemian, that one of the sacrifices he must make was the acceptance of the impossibility of his marrying except after an indefinite number of years.

He had a private income of about one hundred and twenty pounds; this he found himself able to supplement to the extent of fifty pounds by his pen. On the modest total he did not find it difficult to exist; his tastes were not expensive, and as his action was the result of his own wishes, he did not complain of the loss of various luxuries to which he had always been accustomed.

"She's a charming girl," he thought as he sat waiting for his cut from the joint. "That is the word which best suits her. She is pretty and clever, and a dozen other things, but one is scarcely conscious of them when she is present; one only feels a general sort of satisfaction, dependent on nothing in particular, but on her presence generally."

He was not able to keep his thoughts entirely under control during his dinner; they continually reverted to the same subject. "I wonder what she lives on," he found himself thinking. "She can't have saved much, and it must cost something to study singing. There's her sister, too. Well, that is a subject. I can't question her upon. Perhaps she'll tell me to-morrow."

He did not feel inclined after he finished his dinner to return to his room. He had some work to do, it is true, but he was not in the mood to finish it. He resolved to call on Drysdale, who had set his song to music. He remembered that Miss Miller knew him; perhaps he might find out from him something about her.

"Is Mr. Drysdale in?" he asked of a rather dirty servant who opened the door.

"I think he's just going out, sir."

Ellis ran up the stairs, and found his friend in the last stage of despairing haste.

"What do you want, my boy? Can't spare you a moment. Got anything to do to-night? No? Then come and see our opera at the Varieties. I'm conducting there. Where's my hat gone? Show them this card; they'll pass you into the circle or somewhere. Look me up at the stage-door between the acts."

Drysdale was gone before Ellis had time to thank him. On the whole he was rather glad that he had something definite to do. An hour or two spent in listening to pretty music might divert his thoughts a little. He strolled down to the theatre, arriving in the middle of the first act.

His seat was at the back of the circle, in deep shade; he made himself comfortable, and settled down to lazily enjoy himself.

Soon he found himself thinking how very much better it would be for the piece if they could get a girl like Carrie to play the leading part. The principal performer irritated him beyond measure; there was such obtrusive consciousness pervading her every movement.

The chorus entered, and he began comparing each individual with the actress who so irritated him. Yes, there was one there who would have been better suited in the title-rôle. It was Miss Miller.

Her image was so constantly in Ellis's mind that he experienced scarcely any surprise when he recognised her. However, he involuntarily shrank back still farther into the shade, afraid that she would see him, and imagine he had discovered she was an actress and had come with the intention of seeing her on the stage. If she had wished him to come she would have told him where she was playing.

He waited with impatience for the act to end. Directly it was over he went round to the stage-door, where Drysdale soon joined him.

"Pretty, isn't it?" said the conductor. "Wants backbone though—too Frenchy, and no more plot than a farce. How did you like it?"

"Tolerably well; the dresses are nice."

"Oh yes, it's very well put on."

"Who was that brown-haired girl in the chorus with the gold braid round her hat?" asked Ellis, feeling that he had rushed into the subject without much grace.

"Do you mean Miss Vincent?"

"I think her name's Miller. Vincent may be her stage name, though."

"I expect it's the same. She's the sort of girl who would catch the eye of you poetic chaps. She's a sort of mystery to me. She's a treasure in the chorus, I can tell you. She ought to be a principal, and will one day."

"Do you know why she sings in the chorus?" asked Ellis, feeling that he was going at least as far as delicacy would permit.

"I believe Lord Leveston gave her an introduction to the manager. Leveston is part owner of the theatre, you know. By Jove! I must hurry back. Come round again, if you care to, after the next act."

Ellis did not find himself in a much happier frame of mind for the information he had received. He sat out the next act impatiently. This time Drysdale did not make his appearance; he was detained in the theatre. Ellis returned to his seat and

watched the remaining act, not feeling much interest in those portions from which the chorus was absent.

He made up his mind that he would accept the situation. Since he was at the theatre and had seen Carrie, he would wait for her at the stage-door and see her home. She would think it very strange if she happened to discover he had been there and not fulfilled the ordinary duties of civility. Besides, he wanted to see her again.

It was a beautiful summer evening, and at Ellis's suggestion, they determined to walk home instead of taking the overcrowded last omnibus.

"I hope I shall have a carriage of my own some day," said Carrie, taking his proffered arm without hesitation or even thanks. They did not seem needed; the action was so natural.

"You are hopeful," was Ellis's uncomplimentary reply.

"Why not? I am a great deal better than that woman who spoils the principal part, and she gets twenty pounds a week. I only get thirty shillings. Isn't it a shame?"

"Yes, it is. But can't you get a better part?"

"I don't want one. I want to keep quite unknown for the present. I'm only singing in the chorus to get something to live on. I don't mean to work my way up the ladder gradually. I'm going to study for a little longer, and then make a grand rush for fame."

"But can you get the opportunity?" queried Ellis. "I've heard it isn't easy to make a name on the stage."

"Oh, Lord Leveston has promised to manage all that for me."

Ellis did not say anything, but he unconsciously relaxed his slight pressure of the little arm resting on his. As if in reply she continued:

"He's been very kind to me, and he would be a good deal kinder if I would let him. He wanted to pay for my studies, but I told him that all I wanted was a chance. I didn't want to depend on anything but my abilities, and then I should know if I was really worth anything or not."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Ellis warmly. "I think you have made a very brave and courageous resolve."

"I'm glad you think so," she replied, looking up at his face. "It's hard work sometimes."

"I wish I could make it easier for you," he murmured.

"You do? It was very kind of you to come and see me home to-night. I generally have to go alone. I don't mind it much, but I much prefer this."

"Yes, it is decidedly pleasanter than being alone," acquiesced Ellis. "It's often struck me what a pity it is that one is unable to take advantage of the numberless opportunities for doing kindnesses that lie around us; one scarcely thinks of their existence."

He was going on in a rambling half-unconscious way when he became aware that his companion was laughing her light musical laugh. He stopped.

"Do you often tell young ladies that you are doing them a kindness in escorting them home?" she enquired.

Ellis laughed too. "Just the opposite. I was applying the case to myself. I should have had a weary walk to-night had it not been for you."

"That's much nicer," said Carrie.

Ellis found the walk even pleasanter than he had anticipated. He determined to try an experiment; instead of taking the street that led straight towards Fairlight Terrace, he turned down one that would make their walk rather longer. He thought his experiment was successful; apparently she did not notice the manoeuvre. Emboldened by his success, he tried it once more.

"Once is enough," said Carrie quietly, turning in the proper direction.

"There is a precedent for repeating it."

"No, I must go back; that child persists in sitting up till I return."

"I don't think she is more anxious to have you near her than I am."

Ellis scarcely meant to say so much; yet he was somewhat relieved to hear Carrie laugh.

"It is time I returned. I'm quite sure of it now," she said.

He did not urge the matter further. They were nearly silent the remainder of the walk. When they entered the house the narrow hall was dark. Ellis struck a match and lit a bedroom-candle standing on the window-ledge.

"I suppose we must say good-night," he said.

"Don't say it if it is so sad," she replied half mockingly. "There, don't mind what I say," she continued quickly; "it is a sad word, and I don't want to make fun of you, but when you speak like that I am

obliged to laugh at you or I should feel same as you do."

She unclasped her cloak and held out her hand. Ellis took it.

"What a magnificent rose," he said, looking at a large Marshal Niel fastened by her brooch.

"It was a present," said Carrie half defiantly.

"A very charming one," remarked Ellis as carelessly as he could.

He found to his surprise that he was still holding her hand.

"Good-night, once more," he said.

"Good-night."

She withdrew her hand, but instead of going upstairs she unfastened her brooch. Ellis watched her eagerly.

"Would you like to have it?" She held out the rose.

"May I?"

"Why not? Lord Leveston would not object if that is what you are thinking of. He told me to take it home to my sister."

Ellis drew the flower from her hand. It had some slips of maiden-hair fastened to its stem with wire; a small strip of buff tissue-paper bound the whole together.

"I shall keep this," he said earnestly, "as long as——"

"As you live, I suppose?"

"No; as long as you wish."

"It is the same thing," was Carrie's reply as she turned away.

Ellis stood silent, pressing the rose to his lips.

CHAPTER III.

THE afternoon of the next day, Ellis took advantage of his invitation and penetrated to the upper regions of the house. He knocked at the half-open door and was admitted by Carrie.

"This is very kind of you," she said cordially; "it is a long way up here."

"I did not find it so," was his reply.

"I wish I could think of nice things like that to say."

"You say them without thinking."

"There's another," Carrie exclaimed with a musical little laugh. "Florrie, come and shake hands with Mr. Field."

Florrie obeyed rather shyly, and Ellis found himself in the sufficiently unusual position of being an afternoon-caller on two chaperonless young ladies.

Carrie was if anything more self-possessed than usual. It had been Ellis's hope to be

able to take up his acquaintance with her from the point it had attained on the previous evening, but he soon was obliged to acknowledge that the hope was fallacious. He must begin all over again. Carrie's behaviour was free from the least touch of sentimentality, she was once again the cool collected young lady who had received his first advances so calmly.

"Come, Florrie, you must play us your last piece," said Carrie, just as Ellis was hoping that she was beginning to show a little feeling.

Florrie obeyed immediately, going to the piano in a manner that showed she was not accustomed to delay fulfilling her sister's wishes. Ellis listened as attentively as he could, though his eyes were fixed on Carrie, who was leaning over her little sister.

"We were both of us fools last night," thought Ellis rather bitterly, "and she means to make me feel it. It's all my fault; she behaved splendidly till I went too far. I ought to be ashamed of myself. Yet I don't know. Is there anything to be ashamed of in falling in love? I will not be the first to draw back, at any rate; if she encourages me, I will give the reins to my feelings, and chance the result."

But the encouragement did not come. Ellis was aware that he carried in his breast-pocket the rose she gave him, but had it not been there he would have scarcely been able to believe that the scene of the previous night had ever taken place. It was simply impossible to say a word bearing a tender interpretation to this friendly, charming young hostess. Ellis gave up trying, and talked the most ordinary small-talk.

"I had good news this morning," said Carrie, just as Ellis rose to go.

"I am very glad to hear it," he said.

"Yes. I saw Lady Leveston just now; they only went away ten minutes before you came—didn't you see them?"

"I only came in just before I came up," replied Ellis, bewildered. "You know Lady Leveston?"

"Of course I do; didn't I tell you I lived with them three years? I am quite a protégée of hers. The stage manager at our theatre is going to have a benefit, and I am to sing two songs in the second part—it's partly miscellaneous, you know. If I make a success——"

"You are sure to do that."

"I think so," she acknowledged candidly.

"In that case I shall be engaged by Stevenson for two years. You know Stevenson? he gets up all the good concert-tours."

Carrie tried hard not to let her exultation be visible, but could not entirely succeed. Ellis listened whilst she expatiated on the career which was opening before her.

"Stevenson heard me sing a week ago, but he did not say anything, and I thought he didn't care about my style. It seems he thinks I shall make a hit. Lady Leveston talked to him about it. Of course I shall sing under a fresh name. They will ask me to their house, I expect; they always have the new stars of every sort. Perhaps I may see you there some day."

There was a touch of tenderness at the end of her speech, as if she felt she had been too selfishly enlarging on her own happiness.

"I shall be a star of the fourteenth magnitude, you of the first," he replied, holding out his hand. "When do you make your appearance?"

"On the 15th, Tuesday week. You really must come."

"Yes, I will come. Good-bye."

"Good-afternoon. Don't let this be your last visit to us."

"You are very kind."

He was not able to say more. He did not think he should ever find himself in that little room again.

However, when a week had gone by, and he had seen nothing of Carrie except when by chance he met her in the little hall, he thought that civility demanded that he should not break off so suddenly the acquaintance begun even more so. He mounted the numerous stairs, and knocked at the well-remembered door. There was no response; both sisters were out.

He left his card sticking between the panel and frame of the shrunken door, and resolved that that should be the last time he would pay them a visit.

"I'm only boring her," he said to himself. "She cares for me about as much as she does for Drysdale, who is forty and bald as an egg. She would let the Levestons go if she were taken up by a duchess. It's time I went back to business. I was never meant for this sort of thing."

Two days afterwards he found a note on his table.

"DEAR MR. FIELD,—We were very sorry we were out when you called. You will be glad to hear I am engaged by Mr. Stevenson for a year in any case. We leave here to-morrow, so I am afraid we may not meet again. Try and come on Tuesday. I'm sorry I can't offer you any tickets, as it is a benefit affair.—Yours very sincerely,
CARRIE MILLER."

Ellis read the note twice, then put his hand to his pocket and drew out his rose. He seemed for a moment as if about to throw it into the fireplace, but he did not. He replaced it carefully.

"She manages to live down the sentimental part of her nature pretty successfully," he muttered, as he thought of what she said at their first interview. "It took her a day to get over our bit of folly. I wonder how long it will take me?"

The stage-manager's benefit was a great success. The critics were there in force, for there was a new play to be performed, and rumours (due to the kindness of the Levestons) were thick about the capabilities of the new singer. There was no doubt of her triumph. She sang her first song admirably; her second superbly. A shower of bouquets testified to the delight of the audience, who would not be satisfied without an encore.

There was some little delay about the music, and the audience began to be slightly impatient. But when the song began they forgot everything in listening, and at its conclusion there was a storm of applause. The composer appeared leading on Carrie; it was Drysdale.

The shower of bouquets was ended, Carrie was making her last bow, when there was seen fluttering down from the gallery a single flower. The petals flew hither and thither as it fell, till when it reached the stage little was left of it but the stem, bound with buff tissue-paper and wire. Carrie saw it fall, she recognised it instantly, hesitated a moment, and then stooped to pick it up. But she did not glance towards the gallery.

"Withered and dead," thought Ellis as he stumbled down the dark stairs; "fit emblem of our short-lived romance."

Yet involuntarily the refrain of the song he had just heard recurred to his memory, and he smiled as he thought of the first time he had heard Carrie sing the words:

Bright shone the sun, 'twas summer weather,
When first we roamed across the heather,
You and I.

THE ROMANCE OF A LIGHTHOUSE.

A STORY OF STORIES.

By W. W. FENN.

It was as far back as June, 1843, and I was proposing to myself a wandering tour in Cornwall. Though London was already hot and dusty, I did not intend to go just then, but I was collecting all the information I could about that remote district, so far away as it was in those days from railroads and our present notions of civilisation.

Passing Arthur Pengarth's lodgings in Newman Street I recollected the old saying:

By Tre, Pol, and Pen,
You shall know the Cornishmen;

and thinking to myself that he might possibly put me up to a wrinkle or two, I turned in.

"Pen," as he was usually called, was an artist—a figure man, but he had an eye for landscape also, and seemed to invest it with something of the human interest of his rather fanciful pictures of historical and legendary romance. There was always a story in Pen's work. His quotations really had something to do with his subjects, and were not put in to merely catch the eye, and make a break in the Exhibition catalogues.

I found him looking at a water-colour drawing already screwed into a packing-case of more than usual solidity. It was a scene of singular beauty. Taken from the top of a cliff, the high horizon of blue-green sea ran almost entirely across the picture, melting away into the opalesque sky, with hardly a perceptible line of demarcation. Where it cut and touched the land at the nearer points, its vivid transparent intensity shamed the grass into looking brown, even in the spring-like tufts that showed themselves among the primroses that grew in profusion over the graves; for, characteristically enough, Pengarth's foreground was an ancient churchyard. One crumbling buttress of the weather-beaten church itself, moss-grown and lichen-clad, framed the picture to the right by its massive lines and solid texture, thus making the distance, if possible, more ethereal, and forming a contrast to the faraway lighthouse that rose like a ghost in the extreme horizon.

"What a lovely spot! Is that in Cornwall?" I asked.

"Yes," replied the artist; "it is over against a little fishing-village called Pol

Coed," and he cast a regretful farewell look on the picture, as he took up the lid of the packing-case, whereon I read the following address:

"Mr. Reuben Tregarvon, God's Providence, near London, Canada West."

"And who may Mr. Reuben Tregarvon be?" I enquired, "and how do you come to be sending him this, and what is your motto here?" I went on, stooping to examine a tablet on the frame more closely.

Then I read the words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life;" underneath which was also engraved, "Those whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

"The frame was carved by the Rev. Stephen Allan, pastor of Pol Coed," broke in my friend; "and it is a wedding-present on his part to Mr. Reuben Tregarvon, about whom, by the way, there is a very startling story. I did the drawing, as my gift to the young fellow, and here is a sketch of him in propria personâ," he added, as moving the packing-case for the greater convenience of screwing the lid down, he brought into view from behind it a crayon sketch of a man's head.

Never had I seen so beautiful a face. To describe it would be as impossible as to convey the scent of primroses by words to one who had never seen the flower. Clear-cut, delicate features, dark silky beard and moustache that defined rather than hid the curves of lips too thin for the classical ideal of beauty, yet conveying an impression of indomitable strength. And such a pair of blue eyes! Out of the dark face they shone like the glimpse of a faraway sky, and they were so unexpected! for the type of face would have recalled what may be seen in the very early Byzantine manuscripts, had it not been for those glorious blue eyes.

"What a face! Is that your work also?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, it is; but by Jove! I must be off," cried Pen, looking at his watch; "it is half-past eleven now, and I have not a minute to lose. I must take this case to the Euston Square terminus before twelve, and start it off to Birmingham on its way to Liverpool myself. I say, old fellow, just finish screwing the lid down for me, while I change my coat. And don't run away, stay till I come back; I shall not be gone half an hour. There's a whole portfolio full of Cornish sketches in the corner; light a pipe and look at them,

they will tell you more about the land of the West, and the sort of scenery you will find there, than any words of mine will. Painters are not good talkers, they can better describe with their brush than their tongue. Here's the screw-driver, fire away!"

I took it from his hand, and finished the packing of the case for him, whilst he dived into a drawer for his gloves, which were, apparently, the last things he was likely to find in such a medley as its contents presented.

"Hullo!" he suddenly burst out, as he rummaged about with his hands, and produced a roll of MS., "here's the story of Reuben Tregarvon, that I mentioned just now; you might like to read it—I wrote it down for Tom—poor Tom, you remember him?" and his tone softened as he recalled the crippled brother, in memory of whom he was now wearing the black coat he had just put on. "We always said at home that Tom ought to write a novel, and I was to give him my experiences from time to time—so I sent him Reuben Tregarvon's story, as Mr. Allan told it to me. There it is, if you care to see it, only I must be off;" and throwing me the manuscript, he seized hold of the packing-case, which was now ready, and hurried out of the room.

Left alone, I first proceeded to examine the folio of sketches. If the rest of Cornwall were like Pol Coed, and its inhabitants resembled Reuben Tregarvon, it would be indeed a region worth visiting. I was longing to get all the information I could about it, therefore I settled myself in Pengarth's favourite chair (it deserved his regard), lighted a pipe, and went through his drawings carefully one by one. When I had finished looking at them I turned my attention to the manuscript, and soon became even more absorbed in it than I had been in the sketches. The artist hardly did himself justice when he said he was better in describing with his brush than by words—at least, so I thought; whether others will agree with me, it is not for me to suggest.

The wondrous blue eyes of the portrait seemed fixed on mine whenever I looked up from the page, and the roar of the neighbouring thoroughfare sounded like the distant waves of the western sea, whilst for half an hour I sat deeply interested in

THE STORY OF REUBEN TEGARVON.

After a walk of ten miles from Bodmin, I had at last arrived at the church on the

cliff, above the little village of Pol Coed, which was, I hoped, to afford me good sketching material. I had heard that the interior of this church was especially interesting. As I approached the door, it was evident that service was going on, and of an unusual kind, for the building was so crowded that part of the congregation were seated in the porch, and even on the grass mounds that covered the last resting-places of former inhabitants of the village.

On seeing a stranger, a woman whom I guessed to be a sort of pew-opener, advanced and enquired my business, "for," she added, "if it's with the rector, sir, you cannot see him till Reuben Tregarvon is married—him, you know, sir," she went on, "as was like to be hanged, but the rector said he never could believe it—and now he has married her, and they are going to Canada, where his brother has gone before him; and they will be a loss to Pol Coed, though some of them have had pretty rough tempers, for the Tregarvons have been a credit to the place since the time of Adam, and we are glad Reuben was not hanged for his father's sake, let alone that he is as honest a fellow as ever trod on shoe-leather. But here he comes, and his wife—God bless them!—and the rector too, sir, if you are wishing to speak with him."

What was the woman talking about? was she out of her mind? She did not look so; she spoke in the simple tone of one who stated facts that could not be contradicted, but it was impossible to connect the ignominious idea of hanging with the bridegroom's face. I have made a sketch of it, so I will not describe it here. Still, there was something curiously unbridal about the pair; perhaps it was that the girl's dress was plain even to roughness, with none of that pretty coquettishness about it which every woman displays on that one morning, at least, of her life. Hers was a sweet little face, with very short, curly hair, and appealing brown eyes. The two walked gravely to the corner of the churchyard nearest the cliff, and, not in wedding procession, down to the village, the little crowd meanwhile evidently respecting their desire for privacy. Only the rector followed them, leaving his surprise in the care of the woman who had spoken to me.

Again and again, as the crowd dispersed, did I hear the words "hanged," "hanging," "murder," ever repeated. I was determined to get another look at the face

whose beauty outweighed all possible interest in the church, curious as that appeared to be from the casual glimpse I got of it through the open doors. I went round so as to come, at a fitting distance, opposite to the group that so keenly interested me. The bride was bending over a grave to gather some of the late primroses. The bridegroom held the rector's hand in a long close grasp, and the spring breeze brought to my ear the words:

"Good-bye, God in heaven bless you. I little thought I should ever hear the marriage service from your lips a second time." The bride shuddered, and clung to her husband. The rector replied:

"Tregarvon, I would not have you forget God's goodness to you, but I would have you think and speak as little as possible of the details of the past. May God prosper you and your wife in your new home. Let me hear from you, but take my counsel and lock up in your heart the strange experiences you have passed through. A new home and a strange people will help you to this; here, the dealings of Providence with your soul would become a winter's tale to be told on every stormy evening. Good-bye, and may Heaven's blessing rest on you and yours." The man sank on his knees beside the grave and kissed the stone. "Have no fear for that," continued the rector; "whilst I am here I will take care of your father's grave."

The young wife meanwhile was gazing at the scene as if to imprint it for ever on her memory. The man rose, and taking her hand, turned in silence from the spot, and the pair took the now-deserted path towards the village.

The rector gazed after them; he was a young man, barely thirty, and his fair hair and complexion were in strong contrast to his almost Spanish-looking parishioners. I waited for a few moments, and then advancing and raising my hat, I said to him:

"Pray excuse me, sir, but can you tell me where I can find that man who has just left you? I am an artist," I added in explanation, "and I would give anything if he would sit to me for an hour or so, for I never saw so uncommon a type of face."

"Nor so uncommon a type of man, if you knew all," answered the rector good-naturedly.

"I gathered from the talk outside the church that there was something unusual," I remarked hesitatingly.

"You may well say so; it is the strangest affair. You see that lighthouse out yonder? Tregarvon's family have been keepers there ever since it was built. I do not wonder that he wants to get away from the neighbourhood; but it is a long story. I shall weary you with it, if I once begin."

"Indeed, if it is the story of the man you have just married, I should be most interested. I repeat, I never saw so remarkable a face. If it would not be trespassing on your time, I beg you will tell it me. Can you do so here, now? we might sit in the church-porch, perhaps."

"Certainly, by all means; it would be a very fitting place. The fact is," he added frankly, "my mind is so full of it, and I am so alone here, in this retired part of the world, that it would be really a relief to me to talk about it to a person of education. I should like to see how it strikes a stranger. I must write it out, I think, some day, but my eyes will not serve me for more work of that kind than is absolutely necessary. So, if you care to listen, before you begin to make the sketch of the landscape I see you are preparing for—I used to sketch once myself," he added with a sigh—"I will relate to you this rustic drama."

Gossiping in this fashion, we strolled away from the grave near the edge of the cliff, and sat down, according to my proposition, in the church-porch. The door was closed, and we had the place now all to ourselves. The silence and the beauty of the outlook across the broad expanse of ocean were very enticing, for it was one of those calm spring days which come so refreshingly after the long, dreary, boisterous bout of winter which we Englishmen have to endure. The sound of the sea upon the rock-girdled shore below us was reduced to a gentle murmur, whilst an odd young jackdaw or two, cawing quaintly at intervals in the grey tower above our heads, made the solitude, by gentle contrast as it were, only the more evident. Short of the ingle-nook on a winter's night, there could be no more fitting place in the world for one to listen to such a tale, nay, for the matter of that, seeing that the lighthouse, towards which we were looking, and the neighbouring village formed the actual background to the drama, it was certainly the very best place in which to hear about its incidents.

"You must know," began the clergy-

man, "that I came here just before Christmas last. I had been overworked, they said, in London, and my eyes began to fail, so the doctors fell back upon their usual stronghold, and decreed that I must have a rest and change in fresh country air. Just then, fortunately, a friend, a brother parson, had this living presented to him, and he, earnestly desiring London work, we effected an exchange, and I came here. Included in the parish is the lighthouse on that jagged group of rocks you see some six miles out yonder, and the thought of the life led by the guardians of such places round this storm-beaten coast, had always had a curious fascination in it for me.

"Strangely enough, the first sight I had of my people was connected with this far-off beacon. On walking up the village, after getting out of the chaise which brought me over from Bodmin, I met a small crowd escorting this man Tregarvon down the street, and his face struck me on the instant, as it has you, I perceive. Asking the cause of the excitement, I was told that his father, old Reuben Tregarvon, had been suddenly stricken with paralysis, and, as it was his turn that night, together with his son, young Reuben Tregarvon, to relieve the men in charge, the young man took the elder's place, providing a substitute for himself in the person of a lad, said to have come the day before from Falmouth.

"I took but little notice of this at the time. Afterwards I found that this boy had been picked up by old Tregarvon, and promised a permanent place as light-boy at the lighthouse, as old Tregarvon's sons were all outgrowing the place, and the old man's temper had such an evil reputation that no lad from Pol Coed could be persuaded to go with him to solitary confinement in the island pharos. But, on the very morning that old Tregarvon was due at the lighthouse, he was stricken down, and his son took his place.

"You may remember what an awful Christmas we had, and what fearful storms raged far into February. The watch at the light is changed every three weeks, but at the expiration of that time—that is, young Tregarvon's time, you understand—the weather was worse than ever. Storm succeeded storm, with scarce an interval of abatement, and any hope of communication with the light was abandoned as soon as conceived. Thus the three weeks became six, and the six nearly nine.

"'Reuben and the boy will be starved,' said Michael Tregarvon, thinking of his brother. 'They have but six weeks' provisions there at the most; but to attempt to reach the light would be certain death.'

"Still, they were not starved yet, for there the beacon shone, as we could see, save on the very thickest nights; but as far as communication with it was concerned, it might have been on the other side of the world.

"At last, as all things come to an end, the storms came to an end, the wind suddenly dropped to a moderate breeze off the land, and the boat put off with food and the relief-men who were to replace Tregarvon and his young companion. The hours of watching and suspense that followed were passed by me in mingling with the knots of wild, excitable, half-fisher-folk, half-farmers, composing the small population of Pol Coed, who were gathered together near the landing-place, and I was amazed to find how quick and ready they were to imagine the very worst.

"Surrounded by some of the most vehement, I stood on the little pier when the boat came back. You may imagine the horror when it was seen that, beside her crew of four men, but one—only one—passenger was there—Reuben Tregarvon alone!

"A wild cry of anxiety rose from the crowd. Where was the boy? Had he died from exhaustion—from starvation? It seemed more than likely. Or was it possible that—?

"I do not know, sir," went on the rector after a pause at this point in his narrative, "whether you are acquainted with the character of the Cornish people. If you are not, and do not understand their imaginative superstitious natures and their wild, sometimes almost savage tendencies, you may not think it possible that such an idea as that which then succeeded could have arisen in their minds.

"As the boat neared the landing-place and the features of its occupants became visible, the expression on Tregarvon's handsome features seemed to suggest to the people's imaginations the accusation which they were about to hurl at him. At first by a whispered word, and then by louder exclamations, which gradually rose to a shout, they charged him with murder.

"'He has murdered the boy,' they cried, 'for food—for the sake of his flesh. Down with him! down with him!'

"I thought of the reputation for violence

the Tregarvon family bore in the village, and how unpopular it had made some of its members. I shuddered lest the accusation should be true, and trembled lest the crowd should do wild justice on the criminal then and there before my eyes—they seemed quite capable of it. I beckoned to our solitary constable, who was standing amongst the crowd—a man formerly in the London police-force, and whose present post I had obtained for him—and got as near the landing-place as I could.

"'Where is the boy?' I demanded as soon as the boat came within hailing distance. There was a ghastly pause for a moment, and the answer came back, 'Dead—drowned!'

"'He has murdered him,' reiterated the assembled people.

"'Stand back, all of you,' I shouted; 'it is by the laws of his country he must be judged, not by you. Constable, arrest Reuben Tregarvon on suspicion.'

"The constable was prompt, and saw as clearly as I did, that innocent or guilty, it was the best thing to do to save him from the wrath of his fellow-villagers. So, advancing to the stairs, as Reuben Tregarvon came up them, he laid his hand on his shoulder, and arrested him in the usual form. I, standing just above, had a full sight of the supposed culprit's face, as it was upturned. Haggard with famine and anxiety, to my intense surprise a look of the greatest relief passed over his features when he heard the constable's words. Instead of seeming appalled or resentful, he looked like a man who has heard the solution of a sore, pressing difficulty, like a man who saw his way out of some dire strait.

"'It is well,' he said simply, and prepared to follow the constable up the narrow street. The multitude who, a few moments before, had been ripe to shed his blood, shrank away as he passed, and gathered round the boatmen, who, however willing, were unable to afford any more information than that already gleaned. They had found Tregarvon alone in the lighthouse. The boy was gone, and Tregarvon offered no explanation but those two words: 'He is dead! Drowned!'

"My first care on getting Tregarvon to the little room in the small house that served as a lock-up, was to provide him with food. It was evident that the man was dazed from famine. I cautioned him, and told him that anything he

might say would be used against him. He remained silent, save for one question: 'My father—how is he?'

"He is dead; he knew no one after you left," I replied.

"Thank Heaven!" said Tregarvon; "he will never know what he has done."

"I thought the words had misplaced themselves, as those of an overstrained mind are apt to do; but I remembered them afterwards, and then understood fully what had prompted them."

"The question at present was, How should I act? I was, myself, the only justice of the peace within miles. Much as I disapprove of the union of spiritual and legal functions, I had had no choice, for, with the exception of the Squire of Pol Coed House, there was no one approaching a gentleman or a man of education within a good ten miles."

"Meanwhile, food had been brought, and I heard with surprise the familiar words of thanksgiving, 'For what we are about to receive' repeated; and as soon as the much-needed nutriment was taken, Tregarvon lay down on the hard bench and composed himself to a sleep as tranquil as a baby's, but soon to be interrupted."

"A hoarse roar came up the street; the constable rushed to the outer door of the little house, and made it fast only just in time. The crowd demanded Tregarvon, and would, no doubt, have done summary justice on him had he fallen within their clutches."

"I never rightly learned what had actually stirred them up to this renewed outburst of indignation. I imagine, however, it was simply due to a fermentation of the horrible idea which had taken possession of them—a fermentation stimulated, no doubt, by the constantly-recurring comments of the most talkative amongst them. But, whatever was the cause of the tumult, it was evident we could not keep Tregarvon at so insecure a lock-up."

"Therefore, assisted by the constable, more versed in the ways of the law than myself, I, as a magistrate, went through the form, after a brief examination, in the prisoner's presence, of the boatmen who had fetched Tregarvon from the lighthouse, of committing him for trial on a charge of murder at the Bodmin assizes, then fortunately going on. Determining to lose no time when this was done, I announced to the people that it was my intention to take the prisoner over to Bodmin myself that afternoon. This appeared fully to

satisfy them, especially as I also insisted on the four boatmen going with me as the witnesses against him. A conveyance—the only one in the place, half-omnibus, half-van—was procured, and late that evening, to my great relief, I handed over my strange charge to the care of the Bodmin constabulary."

"On leaving Pol Coed, I should observe that, as we turned inland, Tregarvon took a long look at the sea, as one might look the last on a beloved face, but he never put off the impenetrable veil of silence in which he persistently wrapped himself. I slept in the town that night, or, rather, I took a bed at the principal inn; but the events of the day crowded in upon my mind with such never-ending and perplexing confusion that sleep was out of the question."

"I should here pause to say that, hastily as I may have seemed to act in judging, or even suspecting Tregarvon to be guilty of the accusation brought against him by the people, I had no choice. Had I not done as I did, and myself ordered his arrest and carried it through, his life would to a certainty have fallen a sacrifice to the wild lawlessness of the villagers. Their fierce wreckers' blood was up. I had not had them under my influence long enough to hold them in check, for, as I have hinted before, they are not an easy community to manage, and the mysterious and unaccountably strange bearing of Tregarvon himself was not easy to understand, even for me, and to them it must have appeared like a tacit admission of his guilt. I confess I did not know what to make of it."

The assize-list was not a heavy one, and to my satisfaction I found the next morning that Tregarvon could actually be put on his trial in the afternoon. He refused even to see a solicitor for the purpose of conducting his case, and whilst I was talking with him in the prison, he asked for pen, ink, and paper. 'Now,' I thought, 'he is going to write out some explanation or confession.' But no; it was only a short note to his brother Michael, and placing with it a small book which he took from his breast-pocket, he begged to know if it were possible for him to see his brother. Compliance with this request was rendered the more easy as Michael was known to have come over that morning for the purpose of an interview, and soon afterwards the brothers stood in presence of each other. Neither

spoke for a long while. At last Michael exclaimed passionately: 'Oh, Reuben, Reuben, what will come of this?'

"Michael, I beg your pardon, it is hard upon you," was the strange answer; 'but you always wished to go to Canada, you know, and you had better sail before—'

"Before what?" thought I to myself.

"There was again a long silence—indeed, very little or nothing more was said on either hand; and when the painful scene terminated, I was left more puzzled than ever.

"Arraigned at length, Reuben Tregarvon stood in the dock before the assembled court, and to the formal question of whether he was guilty or not of the murder of Sidney Cathcart at the Pol Coed lighthouse came the startling answer, 'Guilty!'

"Does the prisoner know what is the effect of pleading guilty to a charge of murder?" enquired the judge.

"I do, my lord," replied Tregarvon with a calmness that, even from him, surprised me.

"Until that moment I had not realised what might be the result of the trial. In spite of appearances I had never for a moment doubted that Tregarvon would somehow prove his innocence. The whole place swam before my eyes, and though I am partly conscious of the judge assuming the black cap, I heard nothing clearly till the concluding words: 'And may God have mercy upon your soul.' To which Tregarvon replied: 'Amen, God's will be done;' and I saw him look up as if the heavens had opened above him.

"The man who had just been sentenced to death as a murderer only recalled to my mind the Proto-martyr.

"Hold up, sir!" whispered my faithful friend the constable, in my ear; 'here is a glass of water. I could not disturb the court to get you one before. It always upsets a man the first time he hears those words: "God have mercy!" Poor fellow, it's a pity it was not manslaughter.'

"The excitement and heat of the crowded court had so affected me in my then weak state of health, that in spite of the glass of water, I had to lie down for some hours before I could walk to the gaol again to see Tregarvon. When I arrived there, he was already in the condemned cell. He was kneeling by the pallet which served as a bed. His lips moved, he was engaged in prayer, and the words seemed to break from him involuntarily. Never shall I hear again such a rapture of repentance, of faith, of joy, even.

The door was locked on me; I had no choice but to listen. God had heard his prayer, he was murmuring, his expiation was to be on earth—the Almighty had ordained a merciful punishment before taking him home: home to a union with God, and a reunion with his dearly-loved. The most profound repentance breathed in every word; but there was no acknowledgment of the special crime for which he was to suffer. I drew back; I had no services to offer. I could not intrude between this soul and its Maker; this soul, condemned for a cruel and atrocious crime, owning the justice of the sentence. I could only wait and learn. Was it possible that such a man as this could be guilty of the criminality he took upon himself? I was more perplexed, shocked, and astounded than ever.

"During the ensuing days, his demeanour was unchanged. Obedient to all regulations, he seemed to accept everything as a matter of course. His brother came to bid him good-bye, and then learnt that the end had not been unforeseen by Tregarvon. His last act as a free man had been to endow his brother with his savings, to enable him to go to Canada with his family. Indeed, the only shadow of regret seemed to be the disgrace that would fall on others.

"There was no time to forward a petition to the Home Secretary, far-off as we are from London, even had Tregarvon permitted one to be sent. I waited for some—for any account of those terrible days in the lighthouse, but none came, urge him as I would to make a full confession of all, how it had fallen out, and what had tempted him.

"Once he said to me with a shudder:

"It does not take long, does it?"

"The day drew on. I found the hilly ten miles between here and Bodmin only too short for mental communing. I went every day, for the rector of Bodmin was absent, and his temporary substitute willingly yielded to me the charge of my parishioner. The more I thought of the case, the more mysterious I felt it to be. I longed to penetrate the veil of silence. Each morning I felt sure that during that day Tregarvon would give some history of the death-struggle, of his motive—whether it had been in a momentary fit of passion, or whether he had yielded to the terrible temptation born of ravenous hunger. Each evening I returned unsatisfied as regarded any details, but more convinced that the

foul stain of murder could not cling to that man, even in the teeth of his own admission.

"I took him books, for when he had been made to assume the prison garb, he had taken two books from his pocket, and asked if he might keep them. They were a Bible, and a Thomas à Kempis. Guided by this indication, I supplied him with the works of the Mystical School, now in its new strength; and I was astonished at the avidity with which he devoured them.

"On the evening of the last day before that fixed for the execution, he and his brother together received the communion for the dying. Then he shook hands with Michael, and entreated him not to try to see him again; but he begged me to come to him by six o'clock on the following, the fatal morning.

"There was something in his manner that overawed us; his requests were as commands to all.

"His gaolers told me, when I arrived true to the appointed hour the next morning, that he had slept quite quietly with a smile on his face all night. He was dressed when I entered the cell, and he drew me to the farthest corner, while the warder, as he had evidently been requested to do, moved away from us as far as he could.

"I asked you to come early, Mr. Allan," Tregarvon said with some hesitation, 'because—because I want you to do me a great—a last favour—here—now, to read to me the marriage service this morning—before—before I die.'

"The marriage service!" I gasped, overcome by surprise. "It—it is—it is the—"

"Yes, I know; you will read my funeral service later," he said quietly. "Mr. Allan, you have been very good to me. I am afraid this will try you."

"I will read you whatever you like," I said, dominated as usual by the power of the man; and in that condemned cell, to one whose scaffold was already erected, and who was to die in two hours' time, I began reading the marriage service.

"He knelt down with that same strange rapt expression of face that had become almost habitual to him, until I came to the marriage vow, when he rose—as if more conscious of some unseen presence than of mine, and put out his hand, repeating the words after me.

"At this moment a hasty knock was heard at the door. 'Mr. Allan, Mr. Allan,' said the voice of the chief warder—then there

was a moment's pause broken at length by another voice—that of a woman, crying out, in an entreating tone: 'Let me in, let me in, for God's sake! I am Sidney—Sidney Cathcart; indeed, indeed I am!'

"Reuben Tregarvon turned deadly pale. 'It is her ghost,' he cried, and he made a step forward.

"Pushing the warder aside with irresistible force, a girl dashed into the room, and threw herself into Tregarvon's arms.

"I am Sidney, I am alive," she cried. 'Oh, Reuben, they picked me up at sea—hold me, I'm drowning,' and she fainted before Tregarvon could lay her on the narrow bed. Suddenly the truth broke in upon me, the mystery of his conduct was solved.

"He bent over her with loving words, as she returned to life, and to a bewildered consciousness of where she was. 'But they told me,' she said presently, still half bewildered, 'that you were—were to—be——' and she shuddered.

"Ah, not now, not now," cried Tregarvon, with a sudden touch of human feeling; 'oh, Mr. Allan, save me! I can tell all now!'

"Is this really Sidney Cathcart, the supposed boy, who was with you in the lighthouse?" I asked.

"Yes, indeed it is," replied Tregarvon, 'and none other—and—one day during the heavy weather, we were out on the rocks—and—and—she was reproaching me, when her foot slipped. In an instant she was swept into deep water, and carried beyond my reach. I was about to plunge in after her when I suddenly remembered the light. I dared not run the risk, for, if I were drowned, there would be no one left to tend the lamp, and then who could say what disaster might not happen, what number of lives might not be sacrificed, if a storm-beaten vessel, with no light to warn her, should be driven on the rocks!'

"He broke down here, and dropped his head upon the girl's shoulder, as she stood clinging to him. Recovering his voice after a minute, he went on:

"I thought God was very good to let me die, as perhaps I deserved, and thus expiate my sin to her; and perhaps, after long years, to join her in heaven. But now, oh, Mr. Allan, save me, I cannot die now!" and he strained the almost insensible form to his heart.

"Trying to rally my senses after this startling revelation of the truth, I exclaimed:

" 'You cannot be hanged for the murder of a boy—of a person who is still living !' The words sounded almost brutal in their commonplaceness.

"The warders had grasped the situation more rapidly than I had done, and had already sent a post-haste message to the sheriff, who soon appeared on the scene.

"Fortunately, Michael Tregarvon had lingered in the town, in hopes that his brother might relent, and see him again. He at once identified Sidney Cathcart, who, when requested by the sheriff to put on a lad's cap, looked so like a boy that no one present could be surprised that her sex had never been suspected. By degrees we gathered her story, told with shame and contrition, and afterwards verified by thoroughly reliable evidence.

"She had, she said, a very unhappy home. Her mother had married a second time, and the step-father was a bad man. Her twin-brother had gone to sea, and she was very lonely. Her step-father would not let her go to service, as she saved him the wages of a servant, but was not nearly so well treated as if she had been one.

"At last one day things came to a climax, and she determined to run away. Opening a drawer of her brother's to take with her some memento of her own father, she came upon the boy's thick winter suit, and the idea entered her head that she could easier get away if dressed in boy's clothes. 'And somehow it seemed as if Jim would be taking care of me,' she said in her child-like voice. She wished to go to Cornwall, for her grandmother had been a Cornish woman ; but on reaching Falmouth and making enquiry, she had found all her relations dead. A threat of the poor-house had alarmed her, and she wandered along the coast until she came to Pol Coed. Here on the outskirts of the place, she chanced upon old Tregarvon, and had asked him if he knew of any work. He said a boy was wanted for the Pol Coed lighthouse, and offered to take him there on trial for three weeks, his turn for duty coming on that same night.

"Encouraged by the old man's evident respectability, she had been tempted by the high wages to accept the offer, and agreed to join him at the pier that evening at four o'clock. She went to the little inn, and having only twopence in her pocket, had not very wisely ordered a pint of ale, which, with the long walk, and keen sea-air, had thrown her into a heavy sleep, from which she only awoke in time to run down

hastily to the pier. Enquiring as she had been told to do for Reuben Tregarvon, she was hurried into a boat, and it had pushed off from the land before she discovered that accident had substituted for the grey-haired old man she had agreed with, his son.

"This, then, was the key to Tregarvon's bitter passionate repentance. Now the petition for pardon, the longing for atonement, were explained to me at least ; none other knew of those communings with God and his own soul.

" 'But how were you rescued after you slipped off the rocks ?' at last asked the sheriff.

" 'I do not know. We were together, and I slipped ; the sea was very rough. He was just going to jump in, and then I saw him look at the lighthouse ; he rushed into the building for a moment, and returning to the rocks, threw me a life-buoy. I clung to that, and the tide was going out, and I did not know any more till I found myself on board a French fishing-boat. I could not make the men understand me ; they were very kind, and when we landed at Nantes they took me to the consul, who helped me to get back to England—to Falmouth—and I have walked all the way,' she concluded, with a not unnatural burst of tears.

"It was clear she really was the missing Sidney Cathcart. I heard no more, as I was summoned back to Tregarvon. The long strain, and its most unexpected termination, had produced the natural result.

"It seemed that the almost superhuman self-command had been retained until the clock had begun to strike eight. This now unmarked hour was the one on which his thoughts had been fixed for days, and by the time I reached the cell, violent delirium had set in, and the strength of three warders was tasked to hold the man who hitherto had obeyed their slightest word. His ravings betrayed the working of his mind more intimately than he would ever have permitted any sane words to do ; for Reuben Tregarvon being of an intensely religious, highly-wrought nature, the sin against the poor helpless Sidney was the sin that to him so sorely needed repentance. The horrible doubt whether he had really done his duty in staying by the beacon, rather than in trying to rescue her, had rendered the remaining time he had to pass alone in the lighthouse a veritable

hell. Too religious to seek refuge in suicide, he hailed the idea of capital punishment as his only real relief; he courted death, and had looked forward to it, for by this means it was that he hoped to escape future retribution. 'A life for a life,' he kept on repeating. He had acted for the best; he had sinned, and he had repented, and God was coming to the rescue with his great gift of death. That it was an ignominious death—death by the hangman's hands—did not trouble him. It was the gate into the future, the answer to the enigma of life, that by a willing surrender here he might hope for pardon hereafter. He had dreaded a prolonged existence with the eternal question for ever ringing in his ears: 'Was I right? Might I have saved her?'

"Sidney never had any doubt. 'He could have done nothing else,' she said. 'If he had been lost the light would have gone out, and there might have been many lives lost in those storms. Oh, I hope it is not bad for him that I have lived! I will try and make him a good wife, though I am sure I never shall be good enough for him. If only he lives! If only he lives!' she cried again and again in the terribly anxious weeks that followed, when, for my own part, I dreaded life more than death, lest the brain should never recover the awful shock it had borne.

"The poor girl behaved beautifully all through those dreary days, developing from the silly heedless child, whose thoughtless escapade had nearly ended in so terrible a tragedy, into a thoughtful woman—devoted, watchful, and intelligent. It was mainly due to her nursing that Tregarvon recovered, which he did, slowly but completely, from that strange land of delirium where the hapless patient wandered so far away from his anxious watchers—where only phantoms are real.

"Again and again did he hold my hand and entreat me, as the executioner, not to let him suffer more than was needful, or he would thank me, believing me to be the warder.

"'He has youth and strength on his side,' said the doctor. And truly they asserted themselves as he slowly struggled back to health.

"In proportion as he revived Sidney shrank more and more into herself, looking each day more ill and depressed. I also noticed that she had several times sent letters to the post, and at length she took courage and opened her heart to me.

"'Would it not be much better for him,' she said, 'if I went away, and left him to marry another wife? For you see, sir, I have been brought up so differently. We did go to church on wet Sundays when we could not go out in the cart, but it was only because we had nothing else to do, and liked to look at the bonnets and the ladies' dresses. I wrote to mother as soon as I got time, because he never knew I had a mother. Somehow he seemed to think I could not have run away if she were living, and I did not like to tell him; but mother says she will never have me back again, but that I may go to a Home; and I would go there rather than do him any harm,' she continued, handing me a letter ill-written and badly spelt.

"I am sorry to think such a letter ever came from a woman's pen—from a mother to a daughter—it showed the hard, narrow selfishness of a woman without charity, and only used to accumulating petty gains. I have no doubt that much was dictated by the step-father, but the coward-fear of the world, the dread of disgrace, rather than love for the daughter, showed through it clearly. It did much to justify Sidney in my eyes.

"'Tell me what is right to do, sir,' she said. I confess I had had fears that she was morally far inferior to Tregarvon, and many doubts as to how the marriage would answer, but these simple words removed them. Sidney Cathcart had probably never in her life before asked 'what was right.' She was beginning by truthfulness, repentance, and self-sacrifice, and was feeling after the higher life.

"'You have done well, so far at least,' I said; 'for the rest I think you had better ask Tregarvon.'

"By the scene you have witnessed here at this church-porch," continued the clergyman, after another pause, "and yonder by the old man's grave this morning, you know what Reuben Tregarvon's answer was, but I happened to overhear his actual words. Coming into the condemned cell—for we had not been able to move him—indeed I suppose during the earlier part of his illness he was still a prisoner, and I cannot tell the exact date of the arrival of the young Queen's pardon, as it had come when no earthly voice, even the Queen's, could pierce his ear.

"Coming into the cell for the last time, I say—as he was to be removed that evening, I saw Sidney on her knees by the bed, too far for the beseeching hands to reach

her. I could guess the tenor of the faltering words which permitted no interruption till what she had set herself to say was ended. Tregarvon waited till she paused, and then with a great effort drew her close to him. He tried no argument, he denied none of her words; his only reply as he threw his arms around her was:

"My darling, my wife, I love you!"

Sidney never doubted any more. Weak, erring, imperfect as she was, Tregarvon loved her, and it was enough.

"Only one thing remains to be told. A few days after Tregarvon's conduct had become publicly known, a man in a rough pea-coat, and with the evident bearing of a sea-captain, called upon me, enquired after Reuben Tregarvon, and what his future plans were. I said I had no doubt he would accompany his brother to Canada.

"Then," said the captain, 'my brother has just died, and left me a house and three hundred acres allotment-land out at a new place there, they call London. My ship, the Vesta, was one that weathered the storm, thanks to the Pol Coed beacon, in February last. If the man who kept the lamp alight likes to go and work my land on half-profits he may; for,' added he, with a falter in his voice, 'I had my wife on board (although it was all against rules) that voyage, and if we had struck on the reef, I should have had to save the passengers first, and we had only two boats, and one hundred and fifty souls on board! So Heaven bless Reuben Tregarvon! It was my wife's thought,' he added: 'there's the papers, just look, sir, and see that they are all right;' and he hurried from the room. Tregarvon is like many here, as I pointed out to you before, half farmer, half fisherman, and will, no doubt, succeed well"

"Thank you, indeed," I said, as Mr. Allan concluded his narrative, and we rose from our seat in the porch. "I never heard a stranger story; I am more set than ever on having Tregarvon's head."

"Well, your best chance is to go to Falmouth this evening. They lodge for one night at the little waterside inn, The May Flower, and you might get a sitting."

I did go to The May Flower, and prevailed on Tregarvon to give me an hour, bribing him with a promise of a sketch of his father's grave, but we neither of us referred to what the rector had been telling

me of the way in which his marriage had come about.

Here ended Pengarth's manuscript, and in a few minutes I heard my friend return. He had something of the Cornish gift of silence about him, for he asked no questions as to how the story had struck me. He merely went to the folio of sketches, and we were soon immersed in practical details of roads, inns, and conveyances. Only, when I was obliged to go, he said: "If you go straight to Pol Coed, I will get you to take this to the rector;" and he showed me a sketch of St. Stephen, with the features of Tregarvon, and the words under it were: "He that seeketh his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life shall find it."

In a little over a month's time, I was at Pol Coed, and climbing the hill to the churchyard and the rectory. There before me lay the subject of Pengarth's water-colour drawing, not in the tender greyish tints of early spring, but in the flush and beauty of midsummer, verging upon early autumn. The corn rustled ripely, ready for the sickle; the poppies flamed; the cry of the sea-birds came mingled with the low monotone of the waves; the grasshoppers chirped. I breathed the pure air, and thanked Heaven for the mere gift of life in such a scene.

I took no warning from the dead beneath my feet. I only noticed the little village of Pol Coed, to think how charming it would be to spend one's days there. I did not observe that the blinds of the rectory were drawn down; in such heat it was nothing remarkable. But the door bell, when I rang it, sounded with a strange hollow sound, and the woman who answered it was weeping bitterly.

"He's dead, sir," she sobbed, in reply to my enquiries for the Rev. Stephen Allan; "he's dead of the fever; it has been raging down there these two months past," and she pointed to the smiling village under the cliff, "and he has been nursing and teaching every one, and there have been no new cases since he's been took; perhaps he is taken for all of them, sinners that we are never to have heeded his words before. No, sir, you must not go in; his last words were, when he was stricken for death, that no one was to come near him, living or dead, and we were to close the coffin at once, and he's to be buried this evening;" and she added, with a fresh outbreak of weeping, "we shall never see the like of him again."

Yes, the smiling village was a pest-hole of typhoid fever. Mr. Allan's vigorous measures and sanitary knowledge had stayed the plague, but the shepherd had laid down his life for his sheep.

The friend with whom he had made the exchange of livings came that evening to read the funeral service, amidst the sobs of the crowd of parishioners that encircled the grave.

Into his hands I gave Pengarth's sketch of St. Stephen, and he placed it in the church over the tablet "To the Memory of Stephen Allan, Clerk," where the gilt aureole and elaborate vestments are much admired by the congregation; but none have discovered in the saint the features of Reuben Tregarvon.

"It was sent there by the painting gentleman," is now always the explanation to visitors to Pol Coed church; "because you see, sir, as how the rector's first name was Stephen."

Truly, all callings have their possibilities of martyrdom!

THE OTHER SIDE.

By MARY SEYMOUR.

I.

THE bell of Wincombe parish church had stopped, the little building was full of its usual Sunday worshippers, and the Rev. Roland Halliwell had begun the exhortation in his most clerical tones when a sudden whirl and bustle disturbed the attention of both pastor and congregation. It is difficult to say which of their organs was most strongly affected: the clatter of high-heeled shoes, the rustle of silken gowns, the combined odours of patchouli and white-rose, and the various hues of many-coloured raiment all broke at once upon the astonished churchgoers, and were welcomed by the younger portion as heralding the arrival of the ladies staying at Hillside, and thus affording the excitement of guessing their ages and position.

The curate, startled by the sound of their entry, so different from the clatter of the children, or the shuffle of the old women, looked up for a moment, and then dropped his eyes upon his book with a feeling of indignation. Why did such people come in late and disturb the congregation? It would have been more respectful if they had

stayed away altogether; their way of dressing their hair was sufficient to destroy the effects of a year at least of careful Sunday-school teaching, and he was convinced that before a week was over all the most promising girls would have cut and curled their front locks and spent the greater part of their time in trimming hats in emulation of the elaborate head-gear of the new-comers.

There was nothing in their appearance to justify the young clergyman's wrath; both were pretty women under five-and-twenty, and both behaved during the service with extreme decorum, although one of them giggled a little in her pocket-handkerchief when a small boy inadvertently scattered four peppermint-drops and one halfpenny broadcast in the aisle. The accident did not disturb the rest of the congregation in the least, the younger members were engrossed in a struggle to keep their places in the Psalms, whilst the elder ones were in that condition of passive receptivity to which a quarter of an hour's attendance at church reduces the average rustic mind. They used neither hymn nor prayer book, they joined neither in responses nor singing, but they solemnly rose up and sat down at the proper places with their eyes fixed upon some point in the chancel without betraying either interest or weariness by the movement of a muscle. The sermon permitting them to remain physically quiescent for a time was acknowledged by them to be soothing, but the curate's eloquence was not so much admired as the vicar's. This latter's unsparing denunciations of modern free thought and of the dangers of cultivating an intellectual cynicism were very pleasing to his hearers, both as proving his earnestness and their own superiority. His four-syllable words and involved sentences were far more popular than the somewhat ostentatiously simple addresses of the curate.

"What a solemn young parson he is," said one of the two girls who had startled him into indignation; "I would give something to see if he could laugh."

Church was over, and they had left the village behind them, and were climbing up the hill which led to their lonely little cottage; the sun was shining with July heat, the dust was blowing along the unfrequented road, and neither of the ladies was feeling particularly edified by the morning's experience.

"I think," went on the one who had

first spoken, "we were a couple of donkeys to come to such a quiet place; we might have had no end of fun if we had gone with the others."

"And spent no end of money," put in the other, who was the younger of the two. "You know very well, Nelly, we shall live for just a quarter of the money we should have spent at a big hotel."

"And a fine saving it will be," retorted Nelly with a good-humoured laugh, "if we die of dullness, and have to pay that solemn young parson to bury us. He will give me the blues if he does."

"Don't let him have the chance, then. I don't mean to give it him, I can tell you."

The villagers of Wincombe were a little divided in opinion as to the social position of the two visitors at Mrs. Thornton's—the number and variety of their dresses, the unpractical nature of their boots, and their views about the hours and character of their meals, seemed to prove them to be great ladies; but the supporters of this theory had to acknowledge that money was not too plentiful or friends too numerous at Hillside. Finally, Mrs. West, of The Castle of Comfort, soon decided the question in a few words.

"Real ladies! Bless you, no. Where's their livery footman?"

Roland Halliwell had felt no doubt as to their social position from the moment they had rustled into church.

"Very respectable people, doubtless," he mused to himself as he strode over the hills on the Wednesday after he had first seen them. "But I wish they had gone anywhere else. Grace Martin and Mary Dykes are not the only girls who will take to high-heels and tight-lacing as a consequence of their visit. Their influence will be most pernicious."

He sighed heavily. He had just been solemnly interviewed by the village school-mistress on the subject of the misdeeds of Grace and Mary, and he held, besides, the fashionably strong views on the sanitary aspects of dress.

His meditations were interrupted by a woman's voice, and a cry of "Do stop!" made him turn abruptly round. One of the very persons then occupying his thoughts was running and shouting—could she be running and shouting after him?—down the slope behind him. He stopped stiffly, indignant protest at the impertinence expressed in attitude and look.

"Oh, how fast you do go, and why did you not hear me?" began the young woman, quite regardless of his severe air of

reproof, which she considered to be the usual professional badge of his class, and by no means understood to be intended as a rebuke for her own misdeeds. "I thought I should never catch you up."

Roland grew stiffer than before, and then lifting his hat asked if he could be of any use.

"Of any use? Of course you can. Do you think I should have run up hill and down dale for the fun of trying to catch you?" Anyone less wrathful than Roland must have smiled at the association of two such incongruous ideas as himself in this mood of icy repression and fun, but he did not smile for a moment, and his companion went on: "Nelly—that is my friend—has put the heel of her boot through a hole in the plank over the stream. She cannot get the heel out, but she has taken the boot off, or rather"—with a burst of laughter, the motive for which lay deeper than he knew—"she has taken her foot out of the boot, and there it sticks—the boot, I mean!"

Roland listened to the speaker without allowing himself to betray a gleam of intelligence; a slightly mocking look arose in her eyes as she went on.

"If you have a knife and will dig it out for her, I shall be much obliged; otherwise, she must hop home."

Roland was doubly disgusted at her flippancy. He felt in his pocket, drew out a tolerably substantial pen-knife, and announced his readiness to follow her, in a tone of rigid courtesy. The two walked side by side without speaking a word, Maggie Lyndhurst secretly enjoying the situation, and rehearsing a reproduction on some future occasion of the curate's manner and walk. The enjoyment was limited to herself. Mr. Halliwell was not at all pleased with the situation or with the young lady, and was very thankful when he saw an immediate prospect of relieving himself from both.

"All right, Nelly," cried his companion, "I have found someone."

If Roland had felt his dignity insulted by the individual nature of the first appeal, he did not find it soothed by this classification of himself as "someone." The sight of a young lady, seated on a grassy bank by a stream, and ruefully regarding her boot securely fastened by its heel to a hole in the plank over the river, was a sufficiently comical spectacle to have overcome any feelings but those of injured dignity, but it did not tempt him to smile; on the contrary, his consciousness of the growing

absurdity of the situation froze him into greater stiffness of demeanour.

The removal of the little boot, firmly fixed by its French heel, was a matter of some difficulty, but he accomplished it after a few minutes, and restored it to its owner with a bow. The thing was a useless little absurdity, pretty in spite of its defiance of all natural laws, because, like its wearer, it showed traces of such exquisite finish and daintiness. She was older than her companion, Roland saw at a glance, and the striking contrast nature had formed between her pale complexion and dark eyebrows seemed to have been helped out by the aid of art.

"Thank you very much," she said, looking up at him with a pair of dark eyes full of drollery and mischief. "I am awfully sorry to have given you so much trouble. I am afraid you may have spoilt your knife."

"Not at all; can I be of any further use?" with what Nelly afterwards characterised as the politeness of a Polar-bear.

"I think not, thank you. Can he, Maggie?"

"No; unless," and the wickeder and prettier of his tormentors actually laughed again; then added with a pretty appearance of hesitation, "unless you can lend us a button-hook."

The gentleman hardly regretted that he did not possess such a thing, he only stated the fact, and then wishing them good-morning, strode over the hills again at a rate which showed that he did not intend to be again overtaken.

The girls waited until he was out of sight, but never stopped to think whether he was out of hearing, before they gave way to a fit of uncontrolled laughter.

II.

It was the noon of an oppressive August day, Mrs. Thornton's two lodgers were sitting at the open window of one of the upper rooms, and trying to fancy that they could feel a little breeze coming up from the west.

"I wish we were down by the sea-shore," said the younger a little petulantly. "Nelly, feel how hot my head is; do you think there is going to be a storm?"

"Can't say, my dear, but I am sorry your head aches. I am afraid it has been running about after my packing; you are such a dear good-natured little thing, it does seem a shame to ask you to do any-

thing more, but no one can trim a bonnet as you can, and if you wouldn't mind——"

The other moved her head restlessly to and fro in her armchair, but seemed relieved at the notion of employment.

"Give me the shape and the lace then; only remember you are to make them all believe it comes from Paris. I should enjoy taking in that sly Louie."

Nelly agreed to the condition, and the work began. The heat and oppression were forgotten, even the headache seemed of little importance as the artist proceeded with her work; but when it was finished the poor little girl drew her hand across her eyes and said:

"I am sure there is going to be a storm, the lightning hurts my eyes before it comes."

"There is a funny light in the sky," said the other, who was trying on her bonnet, and looking in the glass. "I look a perfect fright," here she arranged one or two straying curls upon her forehead, with an expression which showed how deeply she appreciated the importance of her operations, "and you don't look much better, Maggie. I tell you what," suddenly wheeling round and facing her friend, "I shall stop at the doctor's as I drive through the village, and ask him to come and see you. I wish I wasn't going to leave you, but I am afraid I must, I am due at Liverpool to-morrow."

"Never mind," said Maggie Lyndhurst bravely, though the tears unaccountably rose to her eyes; "I shall be all right to-morrow, dear."

"I am sure I hope you will, we both look perfectly awful. After all, I need not have been afraid of sunburn. I almost wish," with a sigh over her neglected opportunities, "I had gone out once or twice without a veil; I hate a pasty face."

She was still looking in the glass, or Maggie might have felt the remark a personal one; for her own face was white and drawn, and her eyes were heavy with weariness.

"Good-bye, my dear, I shall send the doctor, and mind you write and say how you are," and Nelly kissed her friend effusively as the two parted.

Maggie promised to write, but it was many a long day before the little actress could put pen to paper, or let any one know how weary were her sleepless nights and restless days.

"I say, Halliwell," said Dr. Brown,

pulling up his horse abruptly one day as he passed the curate, "I do wish you'd go up to Hillside and see that poor little thing who is ill there. She has been laid up with low fever for a fortnight, and has no one to speak to but Mrs. Thornton. She is a patient little thing, but I fancy she is frightened out of her wits about herself. I suspect you can do more good than I can."

The Rev. Roland's face assumed a somewhat set expression.

"If you think I can be of any use, I will certainly go."

"You will be useful enough," said the doctor dryly, "if you will help her to be a little more reasonable;" and then as he drove on he muttered: "What airs that solemn young prig does give himself! Well, there is one comfort, he is the more likely to make a woman believe in him."

Roland might be a prig, but nothing save a strong sense of duty could have induced him to face the mocking eyes and generally impertinent demeanour of the young actress.

Mr. Prendergast, the vicar, was away, and likely to be away for some weeks; it was obviously the curate's duty in his absence to attend to the sick and suffering whatever might be his personal feeling towards the individual.

He arranged his sentences in solemn order, and arrayed himself in a triple armour of stiffness and conventionality, but he found all his fine schemes set at naught when he was admitted into the little sitting-room, where she lay upon the sofa.

Whiter than her dressing-gown, with all her soft fair hair brushed back from her pale face, with large dark circles round her blue eyes heavy with unshed tears, it was absurd, useless, cruel to approach her with the stiff greeting which he had composed as a happy mixture of courtesy and defiance.

He came up to her instead, and took her hand very kindly, all his better nature as well as his professional instincts aroused at the sight of suffering.

"I am sorry to hear that you have been ill, but I hope you are getting better now."

There was no answer for a minute, and then, to his surprise and horror, she turned her head aside, and burst into an uncontrolled fit of weeping. Long hours of sickness and terror had left her at the mercy of each passing impulse, never held under the strict control of high-breeding.

Roland walked to the window, walked back again, and patted the sofa-cushion as a kind of compromise between coldness and familiarity.

His repeated appeals, "Don't cry, don't cry, please don't," were not very successful; but at last her fit of weeping wore itself out, and she lifted her head from the sofa-cushion where she had buried it, to say, through her sobs:

"I am very sorry, indeed I am; but I have been so ill, and so frightened."

"You must not be frightened though; you are getting better now."

She looked at him with enquiring eyes; he could not resist the mute appeal for help and comfort, and the last faint shadow of resentment vanished from his soul.

He sat down beside her and began to speak to her in the low clear tones which had made him more popular in the cottage than the pulpit, and she listened with a sense of rest and consolation in the presence and sympathy of a human being who was so obviously better able than herself to comprehend and face the terrible realities of life, sickness, and death with which her mind had lately been filled.

"Will you tell me one thing?" she asked, as he rose to go, and she timidly laid her white hand on his black coat-sleeve, as if she derived some strength from the contact. "Please tell me the truth."

"I will tell you nothing but the truth, certainly."

"Am I going to die?"

She whispered the words in a low awestruck tone as if she were afraid of them, but she never moved her watchful eyes from his face. She felt as if the question of life or death hung upon his answer; the confusion of the offices of priest and prophet is characteristic of an elementary stage of intellectual development.

"Certainly not, at least not now in this illness; you are getting steadily better."

"But I am quite sure Dr. Brown sent you to me! I know he did because he thought I was dying."

She was on the very verge of tears again, but stopped as Roland answered her quietly:

"You talk as if I were an undertaker; I assure you I am not."

The tears changed to a smile, and then youth triumphed over the severity of his professional demeanour, and her terror of the unknown and awe of him, and the two laughed in a pleasant duet.

"I will send you some books, then," he said, as he bade her good-bye. "And you must not think too much about yourself, but read, and get strong quickly."

"Thank you," she faltered, not daring to protest against the books, but foreseeing the arrival of a large supply of tracts. "I suppose you could not come and see me again? You see," with hesitating entreaty, "there is no one but Mrs. Thornton to speak to, for I am quite a stranger to every one in the village."

Roland's mind was an ill-regulated one in spite of his Oxford training, or else why should he suddenly connect this poor little actress with a certain man who went down to Jericho and fell among thieves? The ladies of Wincombe would have smiled at his comparison of them with the priest and Levite of old, for, after all, as his vicar always said, "One must never forget the danger of any attempt at the practical application in everyday life of the theoretic teaching of abstract truth."

III.

If Maggie Lyndhurst had begun her acquaintance with Mr. Halliwell by betraying a discourteous want of respect for himself and his office, she made up for it subsequently by cherishing an almost superstitious degree of veneration for both.

Admiration, good fellowship, friendship, she had received in plenty during the course of her twenty-two years; but she had never before known anything like the constant companionship of a man both by nature and training her intellectual superior. Had she been in her usual health and spirits, she would have probably resented the slightly condescending air of kindness with which he treated her; but then, had she been her usual self, full of fun, defiance, and impudence, he certainly would not have climbed up to Hillside every other day to bring her fresh books, and to chat to her for half an hour.

She was lonely and depressed, his visits cheered the weary hours of convalescence; she was ignorant and frightened, he taught, counselled, and consoled her. It was not strange if she began to count up the hours between his visits, and to watch for the first sight of his tall black figure striding over the moors towards the cottage.

She recalled with shame the mimic scene she had enacted to Nelly, in the

very room where she now sat longing for his coming.

What would he think of her if he knew that she had imitated his stiff demeanour and severely formal tones; he who had been so kind and friendly. She blushed a little at the bare idea, and, jumping up, rearranged the chairs and tables, though she was so weak that the lightest of them was a heavy weight to her tired arms; yet any fatigue was better than being reminded of that dreadful occasion by the unchanged appearance of the room, and the set arrangement of the furniture.

Then she resumed her seat in the arm-chair, a little out of breath with her exertions, and began to watch again for his coming.

"Such a religious man. A clergyman, too!" she thought to herself naively; "and yet so good-natured and kind. There he is, with a heap more books. I do hope he will stop a long time."

The conversation between these two, who could not be supposed to have very much in common, never flagged or grew tiresome; but it was generally Roland who talked, and Maggie who listened. They discussed the books he lent her, which were not at all of the nature of tracts, but concerning which he naturally had more defined opinions than she, and often touched upon more solemn subjects suggested by her reading or her half-childish terror of illness or death.

It was very satisfactory, he felt, to see that she was really growing to understand such matters, and shaking off her somewhat heathenish views of serious things. He was really thankful that he had taken Dr. Brown's hint and visited her. Who knew but that this illness might become a source of benefit to her during her whole future life.

But their talk was not limited to such grave matters only. Roland professed the many-sided interests which are supposed to be the badge of a higher culture, and was quite ready to descend to a lower level of conversation than the one which Maggie thought natural to him.

The two actually discovered that they must have been within a mile of one another on the occasion of one University boat-race, and this striking coincidence afforded both of them a considerable amount of pleasure. Of theatrical matters, and of her own life, Maggie spoke very little; she had an instinctive feeling that the ground was dangerous to enter upon,

and yet she might have told him every detail of her past without arousing in his mind any other feelings than those of surprise and admiration. Surprise at the amount of hard work necessary in the pursuit of a profession generally associated in the public mind with the wearing of smart clothes and the lavish frittering of a too easily earned salary, and admiration at the courage and endurance the lonely little woman had shown in facing the fatigues and disappointments of her life.

Maggie recovered her health slowly, but steadily, and Dr. Brown and Mrs. Thornton each attributed her returning colour and her renewed appetite to successful medical treatment and the delicious air of Hillside respectively.

The patient was grateful to both, and was not too careful to enquire the cause. One day, about a fortnight after his first visit, Roland found her busily employed in trimming a hat, her cheeks rosy, and her fair hair restored to its former curly arrangement on her forehead.

Roland noted the fact with a grave disapproval quite disproportioned to the offence, but he sat down and began to talk as usual.

"What do you think of my hat?" Maggie asked with a simple confidence that every human being must be interested in so vital a question. "Ought the feather to go in on the right or left side? I have looked in the glass, and asked Mrs. Thornton ever so many times, but I can't make up my mind."

She put it on her head and looked at him with solemn eyes. No man could appreciate the full importance of the question, but it was certainly desirable to secure some advice superior to purblind Mrs. Thornton's.

Roland did not answer.

"You don't like it," she went on quickly; "I see you don't; and yet I made it all myself, and thought it very pretty."

"The hat is very well," with an almost unconscious accent on the noun.

Maggie sprang up and looked in the glass.

"Then my hair is out of curl. No, it isn't. What do you mean?"

"I can't think why you wear that thing, you look very much better without it," Roland made answer, apparently unconscious of the impertinence of his remark.

"Look better without it?" in accents of extremest incredulity. "Oh, I never heard such a thing; I should be a perfect fright."

But when Roland paid his next call, Maggie's curls had disappeared, and her pretty white forehead was again visible.

After all it was not worth while to take the trouble to curl one's hair, when people liked one better with it smooth.

IV.

It must not be supposed that Mr. Halliwell's visits to Hillside passed without notice or comment from the neighbours, and it is quite possible that he himself might have been startled into discontinuing them had it not been for the friendly interposition of the squire's wife. Lady Laura Greenhill was possessed in a high degree of two qualities, neither of them distinctly mischievous in themselves: a keen sense of her own powers of management, and an ardent desire to benefit her fellow-creatures. Taken singly, each of these attributes would have been merely amiable weaknesses, but when held in combination, the result was to make her ladyship the most meddlesome and mischievous woman within ten miles.

When she pulled up her ponies and called Mr. Halliwell to the side of her pony-carriage, he suspected an unpleasant interview, though her first words were amiable enough.

"Oh, Mr. Halliwell, I wanted to ask you when Mr. Prendergast is coming home; I feel so very anxious that he should return—for your sake."

"You are extremely kind, Lady Laura, but I have not been feeling the double work at all a heavy burden, I assure you."

"It was not the work I was thinking of, Mr. Halliwell, young men ought to work, but the visiting of that young person at Hillside; it would be much better if the vicar were here to do it."

Roland bowed stiffly.

"I do not mean to say that such persons ought never to receive spiritual comfort and advice;" but if Lady Laura did not mean to say this, her emphasis certainly left no doubt as to her feelings on the subject; "but you are quite young, and I think it only fair to warn you that people are really saying very ill-natured things about you."

Roland controlled his voice to say stiffly that he trusted he should never be turned aside from an obvious duty by any dread of slanderous tongues; and then deliberately set his face towards Hillside,

which he had resolved not to visit until the next day. Lady Laura frequently had occasion to congratulate herself on the success of her interference.

"I had a letter this morning," said Maggie to Mr. Halliwell one lovely morning in September, "a letter from Nelly—you remember her? She has had such a nice time, and I am going to see her next week for a little, before the theatre opens."

"You seem quite glad to be going away," said Roland gloomily. Why should he wish her to be sorry?

She looked up at him, her heart beat faster for a moment with pleasure as she recognised the reproach in his tones. Then she felt a sudden sadness seize her as she saw that he was displeased.

"Indeed I am not glad; you know—you know I am very sorry."

Her voice said more than her words, her look of pleading affection met his eyes, and then Maggie, startled by her own tone, and frightened at her self-betrayal, drooped her head upon the table and hid her face, rosy with sudden shame, in her right hand. When Roland saw two tears rolling down between the fingers, and falling unheeded upon the table, it was only natural that he should take the trembling left hand in his own and whisper some words of comfort. Then they were both silent for a time with that delicious sense of perfect bliss which no later happiness can equal, no subsequent misery can destroy.

It was Maggie who broke the silence; snatching up the first book which came to hand, she asked him nervously if he had ever seen her photographs, and turned over the leaves without seeing any of the pictures very distinctly. She talked fast and eagerly to hide her confusion, and Roland felt as if he were in a dream, looking at the theatrical celebrities, and hearing her remarks.

"And this," she said, pausing before a large cabinet-sized photograph, "is me."

There was a certain innocent triumph in her air; the dress had been considered such a success—she had been so much complimented upon it. She could not imagine the sudden cold horror which seized Roland at the sight of the picture, or the terrible awakening it brought about from the dreamy happiness of the last few minutes. He stared with desperate eyes at the pretty face and the quaint cap, at the smart doublet and hose, at the dainty boots.

"I was one of the four, all dressed alike as to cut, but different as to colour; pages,

one in yellow, one in pale-green, one in blue. I was in crimson-brown; I have a picture of us all somewhere."

She eagerly turned over the pages of the book, but she could not shut out the picture from Roland's mind. In the midst of his confusion and despair he recalled a letter he had received that morning from his most intimate friend, enclosing the likeness of the woman he was about to marry. He laughed aloud as he thought of the two pictures, but there was no laughter in his heart.

Somehow or other he got out of the room and out of the house; he had walked for miles before he was able to pursue any connected plan of thought, but when he flung himself upon the grass, exhausted with physical exertion, he knew that the struggle was over. He foresaw that he must suffer, but the suffering caused by the subordination of mere feeling to a higher law of self-sacrifice is full of consolation and promise.

It was when he was trying to embody this idea in a sermon that evening that his landlady brought him a note. He easily guessed from whom, and the severe manner of the bearer would have enlightened him, had he been dull of sense. It contained only a few words.

"DEAR MR. HALLIWELL,—I am so much better that I am going home to-morrow. Thank you very much for all your kindness and the books; I have left the last six you lent me with Mrs. Thornton. M. L.

"P.S.—I shall be acting at the Prince's next month."

Poor little Maggie! No well-brought-up and properly-chaperoned young lady could have been more conscious of the propriety of running home and leaving her lover to follow her when he pleased.

Roland read the note through twice, and then tore it into tiny fragments; when he had thrown these into his waste-paper basket, he resolutely returned to the writing of his sermon.

It is needless to say that the stage-door keeper at the Prince's was never scandalised by any enquiry from a clergyman after Miss Lyndhurst, or that Maggie watched each post without gaining anything but a heart sickness and despair which she had never before imagined that life could hold.

Roland has never heard of her since. He has carefully avoided any chance of

meeting her again, and he still shudders as he thinks of his narrow escape. If he were to hear that she has grown somewhat more reckless of public opinion, more incredulous of the reality of religion, more eager in her search after all forms of excitement, he would express regret but no surprise.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

By MISS E. MULLEY.

PROLOGUE.

WHEN I first saw Torre Grange, some three years ago, the charm of a summer's day lay over it. As I looked on the pleasant old house with its cheerful face and caught sight of bright home-like rooms through its open doors and windows, I—fresh from the dust and turmoil of a city—drew an envious breath.

How calm and restful it all was! How shut out from the great world and all its troubles! As my eyes wandered over its smooth-shaven lawns, its gay flower-beds, as I saw it all bright in the morning sunshine, winter, with its grey skies, bare earth, and sunless days, its storms and desolation, seemed to my imagination so far away that I could not picture it as ever reigning here. In like manner sorrow and sickness, death and disappointment, seemed to me to belong to a world outside. Here surely, I told myself, nothing but sunshine, life, and happiness could find a place!

As I looked, a figure came out of the house, the figure of a little old lady with withered cheeks and bright sparkling eyes, a cap all white satin ribbons upon her head. She stood a moment listening, an eager smile upon her face.

Suddenly the bells from a tower that must have been close by broke out into a joyous peal. The old woman nodded her white-ribboned head over and over again as they came pealing out; then, catching sight of me for the first time, smiled and curtsied to me.

"Good-morning. You seem all sunshine and marriage-bells here," I said, advancing and smiling too.

"Yes," said the old lady, evidently pleased to be addressed; "the wedding is this morning, but not here—away up in London. Ah deary me, things have come right at last, and they'd need to!"

At her words my theory of a moment ago seemed swept away. The peaceful

sun-steeped place, then, knew its storms and winter after all! I could not relinquish my dream without a sigh. My new acquaintance looked at me inquisitively.

"You are a stranger. But be pleased to come inside and rest, and if you care, to hear all about it."

Of course I did. And here is the tale the old woman told me—not precisely as it fell from her lips, for it was to the principal actors themselves that I became afterwards indebted for the completeness of my story.

CHAPTER I. OUSTED.

ALTHOUGH Jonathan Hardstaff had been the owner of Torre Grange for the last twenty years of his life, and to the countryside he had become at once by right the squire, to Torreton, that claimed him by right of birth and bringing-up, and that could, moreover, talk pleasantly of his great-grandfather, if only in a legendary sort of way, the dingy red-brick house and office in the High Street stood long before the country seat, and Lawyer Hardstaff he remained to the end of the chapter. The end of the chapter came with an awful suddenness.

It was the house in the High Street, which had seen him almost daily all his life, where up to middle-age his life had indeed been wholly passed, which saw the last of him.

There were no leave-takings, no good-byes, no last wishes, no commands. The old man of many friends died alone in his easy-chair, and his lips were closed for ever.

They carried him from the dark silent house to the church close by, and then a whisper went through Torreton that all search had proved unavailing, and no sign nor token of a will had been discovered. The days went by, spring was at hand; the squire, or old Lawyer Hardstaff, as Torreton preferred to call him, had been some time dead and quietly resting by the side of the wife from whom twenty years of death and silence had separated him, under a slab in the centre aisle of the parish church for the last two months, and still no vestige of the sought-for document.

The Grange, the house and office in the High Street had all been ransacked; bureaux and desks, every available article, had alike been rifled, but in vain. Not that this affected public opinion in the least. Outsiders might choose to question

"the last will and testament of Jonathan Hardstaff, Esquire," having ever existed, but Torretton would listen to no such heretical surmises.

Not that this helped matters much, and as time went on, and brought no solution of the mystery, even the most eager in the affair were at last compelled to admit that there was nothing more to be done—nothing, that is, but for the next-of-kin to step in and take possession, which in due time he did.

Now this, as all Torretton boldly declared, was the very last thing in the world the old lawyer had ever intended, and calculated, if ever affairs mundane could penetrate where he had gone, not only to make the poor gentleman turn in his grave, but, furthermore, to lift up that slab in the centre aisle and step forth to set matters right for himself; for if there had been anyone for whom Jonathan Hardstaff had, while in the flesh, professed a hatred and a loathing, who had never been allowed even to enter his doors, it was his faraway cousin and only relative, George Whympier, the man who now stepped into his empty shoes—and very comfortable ones they were—sat master at the table he had never been allowed to approach, and—or so said rumour—drank long and deep of the wines their late owner would sooner have seen emptied into the streets than have given him.

As for poor Dick Charlton, the dead man's dearly-loved step-son and boldly-declared heir to it all, he went out from the home he had been taught to look upon as his own, come what might, heartbroken and almost penniless.

The usual course of school and college, followed by a run round the world, was all the preparation the young fellow had known for battling with it. He had been brought up to no business or profession; he had picked up something of farming, and at the Grange was his step-father's lieutenant and right-hand man, and it gave him interest and occupation enough. But that, like Othello's, now was gone, and poor homeless Dick felt that his ruin was indeed complete. To crown its bitterness, he had been on the eve of marriage when the blow fell, for, as I have said, the old lawyer's death had been sudden and unlooked-for.

The girl he loved only held him the dearer for his troubles, it is true, and clung faithfully to him in those days of bewildering misery, doing her best to win him back

to hope and courage; but to poor, crushed, ruined Dick it seemed that even her love and faith could bring no comfort. The blow that had shattered his happiness and hers, that had robbed him of his home, and, as it seemed to him, had made his very life another's, had been too sudden for even his brave heart. By what mysterious chance it had all befallen him he knew not; he only knew that an awful wrong, never intended, had been done him, and that he was powerless as the dead to set it right.

CHAPTER II. "POOR DICK."

TIME wore on; the two months just spoken of lengthened themselves out to twelve, and the mystery of the missing will was a mystery still. It no longer formed the principal subject of Torretton gossip, it is true, but it was not forgotten, nor likely to be so long as Dick Charlton's name was remembered in the place, or the old house that had been his home sheltered the stranger who had ousted him. The man had a right there—though there were a few bold enough to question even that—but the world is apt to judge more by feeling than by reason, and the world—the little world of Torretton—could not forgive him. Not that he was much the worse for it, or troubled himself at all about either his neighbours or their opinions.

He had made the acquaintance of some of the least respectable characters in the place, and these, save for certain other kindred spirits, old friends, some of whom were always to be found staying in the house, were the only ones who crossed its threshold.

George Whympier had been one of the most eager in the search for the missing document; that, no one of those most set against him could deny.

"If it is to be found, find it," he had said with many oaths. "Don't let me have the confounded"—only he used a much stronger term—"thing turning up when I am comfortably settled down, and have got used to looking upon the place as my own, to say nothing of as much money as I can spend, and more wine than I can drink;" at which red-faced George would chuckle, and Torretton had to confess that he was right.

But what was not right, and what Torretton could not forgive, was that no offer was made to share the good fortune that had so unexpectedly fallen to his lot

with the unfortunate man who had so unexpectedly lost it.

"He must make over something to poor Dick," the onlookers declared, "something handsome it ought to be, considering what a hard case it is, and all he has got. If not that, he will surely give him something to begin the world with."

But no, no offer of help, small or great, ever reached Richard Charlton, and as "poor Dick" he went out into the world, to make his way in it as best he might. Kind hearts followed him, and good wishes in plenty; something more substantial, too, might have been his, but he could not bring himself to take that which he might never be able to pay back.

So Dick went forth into the great world free from debt, free from everything but the necessity of earning every crust he ate. He did his best, but there seemed so little to be done, so many to do it. Still he struggled bravely on through the weary months. But to what end? The crust to eat, the roof to shelter him had been his, and that was about all. He found himself no nearer success, no farther on the road to wife and home.

"I give it up!" he said one day at the twelvemonth's end, to the girl who was waiting patiently, and with the ever-springing hope of love and faith, for brighter days to dawn. "I give it up. There is no room for me here, Fan, my dear. I must try elsewhere. There is room and work, too, 'the other side.' What do you say, Fan? You won't be afraid to come to me when I have made a home there? It mayn't be just yet, and it won't be a palace, I dare say," poor Dick added, a little bitterly.

"It will be home, Dick, if you are there," said Fan, with a happy laugh—there were tears, too, in her eyes—"and I will wait for you, oh, any time, till I am old and grey, dear—and you don't want me!"

Then Dick laughed too, and kissed away the tears that Fan pretended were not there at all.

The two were sitting in the little school-room of Frances Langley's home in a highly respectable though decidedly unfashionable quarter of London.

A clerk in a Government office, with the magnificent salary consequent thereon, and a baker's dozen in the way of offspring—and such was John Langley, our Fan's father—scarcely looks, however genteelly he may be connected, to settling down in

the sacred precincts of Mayfair. Neither when one, and that, moreover, the head and front of the aforesaid "baker's dozen," proposes to reduce the number of mouths to be fed and backs to be clothed, and begin the world on her own account, is she likely, though tears may be shed, and loving hearts may long to keep her, to meet with much opposition.

So Richard Charlton and Frances Langley made the most of the stray half-hour they had managed to secure to themselves, and discussed their future and made their plans without any fear of being called upon materially to alter or change them by anyone outside.

"And so in a fortnight I shall be off," said Dick, rising, as the supper-bell sent out its summons for the second time. "I know something of farming if I don't know much of anything else, and that hundred pounds is still standing in my name in the Torreton Bank. I made up my mind not to touch a penny of it till I wanted it for some such thing as this. Oh, I shall do," Dick went on, "never fear; and perhaps by this time next year you may be coming out to me. I couldn't leave the farm, you know, Fan."

"Oh, Dick!" laughed Fan, "you are a second Martin Chuzzlewit or Mr. Micawber."

"Never mind," said Dick, who had talked himself out of the 'blues.' "You wait and see. Next week I am off to Torreton to say good-bye to old friends, and to break the bank by the withdrawal of my capital. And, then, farewell to the old country."

"And I," said Fan, "shall at once put myself in training for a squatter's—I believe that is the word—wife. There is a cow somewhere in this neighbourhood that lives in a cellar. I shall take lessons in milking."

CHAPTER III. A LAST LOOK.

RICHARD CHARLTON'S adieux in Torreton were all said; he had withdrawn his hundred pounds from the bank, and was making ready for the return journey, when he suddenly decided to do that which he had told himself all along that he would not do. But at the last his purpose failed him. He found that he could not bring himself to leave without a sight of the old place—a farewell look at the old home that, save in dreams, he should never see again.

He had been a couple of days in the place as it was, a few hours' delay in leaving

it could be of little consequence. There was a train which left for London about midnight. It was the early days of railways, and Torretton had only achieved a station and direct communication with the outer world since he left. He would take his hand-bag there and leave it till his return, three or four hours' later, in time to catch the "mail."

The December day had drawn to a close, and darkness fallen. Dick had said his last good-bye, deposited his bag at the station, and was well on the road to the Grange by the time the town clocks were striking six. In another hour he had reached the lodge-gates. But though he stepped manfully out, his stout heart was failing him. The familiar road, every tree and shrub distinct in the clear cold light of the now risen moon, was opening the old wounds with each step he took. The pain was so sharp he more than half regretted his changed purpose. But he went on.

"I must see the old house," he told himself, "at any cost. I wonder if Mrs. Miles is still there? I never thought to ask. I must see her too."

Presently he stood before it. How cold, silent, desolate the place looked to him. Not a stray gleam of light about it anywhere visible; not a sign of life about it. And yet it was home, or had been ever since he could well remember. He had known no other, and now he came to it like a thief in the night—the home that had been his, that should be still, that would be even now, he almost cried aloud, if only the dead could speak—if only the dead could speak!

Poor ousted Dick! a great ball climbed up into his throat and nearly choked him. He gave one more look at the dark desolate-looking place, and then found his way round to the back door and knocked. A young girl came at his summons, but she was a stranger to him.

"Is Mrs. Miles in?" said Dick, hazarding the question.

"Yes, sir; will you please to walk in?"

"No, thank you," Dick answered; "but if you will just ask her to come here to me one moment, I shall be obliged."

The girl hesitated.

"Say an old friend wants to see her," said Dick, and then the girl, carefully shutting the door upon him, left him standing there.

He had not long to wait. Presently the door was opened once more, and Mrs. Miles herself stood peering at him.

"Don't you know who I am, Mrs. Miles?" Dick asked.

At the first sound of his voice Mrs. Miles started.

"Lawks-a-mussy, if it isn't Master Richard! Oh, Master Dick, my dear, dear boy, come in!"

She had caught his two hands in hers, but although Dick returned her eager grasp warmly enough, he did not let her draw him a step nearer.

"No, no, old woman," he said gently, "I can't do that."

"Oh yes, you can, my dear," the old woman rejoined. "He isn't in, and won't be for the next hour, he's off to some races, thank goodness, and my room's my own, and I ask who I like there. You need not go a step further, but there, you're free and welcome, Master Dick, and there's a draff here fit to blow one's head off!"

Whereupon, seeing Master Dick still hesitated, Mrs. Miles gave vent to the most sepulchral of coughs, called up, I must confess, for the occasion. Hearing which Dick was compelled to relent, and forthwith followed the old housekeeper to her own quarters.

When Richard Charlton found himself once again in the familiar room, he felt as if he had never realised to the full his banishment from all his accustomed surroundings until now.

The flashing fire striking into odd corners, lightening up queer china-laden cupboards, falling on the well-known figure of the old housekeeper herself; the scene at once so homely and home-like, so laden with childish memories, appealed to him as perhaps other and more pretentious quarters of the old house might have failed to do. Old recollections crowded upon him—his wounds bled afresh.

It was some time before he could do more than answer in monosyllables all the questions with which his old friend plied him. But the history of the past twelve-months, Dick's plans for the future, did not take long in telling.

Mrs. Miles shook her head in the strongest disapproval; as the tale went on the curls of her rusty-brown front swung and danced.

"Good Lord, to think it should have come to this!" she cried. "Don't do it, Master Dick dear, don't do it! Never go away from the old place. Listen to what an old woman tells you—never go away."

She had left her chair by the fireside,

and was trotting up and down the room in her impatience and irritation.

"I think it is the old place that has gone away from me," said Dick grimly. "What can it matter where I am? it can never be mine again. If George Whympers died to-morrow it would not the more be mine."

"Only wait," said the old woman excitedly, coming up to where Dick sat, and laying her hand upon his arm. "If I did not think and believe you would have your own again, do you think I would have stayed on in the place with him? Not for all the George Whympers in the world! Listen to me, Master Dick," the woman's voice sank to a whisper, her lips almost touched the young man's ear. "That will be somewhere about, and he knows it."

Richard Charlton turned on her a white startled face, then he broke into a laugh.

"No need to look at me like that—no, nor to laugh either. I ain't out o' my senses just yet; but that there will's to be found, Master Dick, and he could find it. No, I don't know nothin' more, but I know that as well as I know my own corns, and I couldn't know nothin' better, and if he knew I only knowed that much he'd wring my neck like a sparrer's. But I can keep my eyes open and my mouth shut, Master Dick, if I can't do nothin' else."

"You can do something more for me, now," said Dick, rising. "Nothing about the will, we must try and forget that; but there is something I left behind me, and that I have often wished for—it's nothing more valuable than my old tobacco-jar, but it's my own; my father gave it me with my first pipe, and I should like to take it with me wherever I may go, for the sake of old times. It used to stand on the mantelpiece in the little smoking-room."

"I know; but it isn't there now," said Mrs. Miles. "I know where it is though, it's on the top shelf in the cupboard in master's bedroom—not that he's any master o' mine—you shall have it in a jiffy, if so be he hasn't walked off with the key, for he's precious fond of locking things up, and with reason, I say, Master Dick."

Dick was not left long in doubt. Mrs. Miles was back in a twinkling, the jar triumphantly tucked under her left arm.

"The key was there," she said; "a sign my gentleman had been at the whisky before he went out."

"Well, we'll forgive him this once," Dick laughed; "and now, old woman, good-bye."

He stooped down and kissed the soft withered cheek.

"Is it good-bye—really good-bye, my dear?" she cried.

"Really good-bye," Dick echoed, his voice trembling.

"You will write; you will let me know where you are? And—and keep up your heart, my dear boy, keep up your heart." Mrs. Miles herself was crying like a baby.

"Yes, yes," said Dick hurriedly, "I promise," and breaking from her detaining arms, he passed quickly from the room and house, and in another minute was on his lonely way, his back for ever turned upon the place that should have been his home.

CHAPTER IV. MRS. MILES DREAMS.

MRS. MILES stood for a few moments at the open door watching the retreating figure of her young master until the shadows swallowed him up and he was lost to her. Then with a sigh she returned to the comfortable warmth of her "snuggery," as Dick was wont to call it, and drawing up her armchair to the fireside set herself to think.

There was nothing beyond the falling of a stray cinder to disturb the quiet, and drowsiness soon stole over her.

Deeper and more regular came her breathing; then the old woman slept. And then—or according to some—when she was on the point of re-awakening, Mrs. Miles dreamt.

Richard Charlton was still her companion, and the old tobacco-jar stood on the table between them. But they were not alone, her old master stood there too. She felt no surprise at seeing him, she only had the strange feeling that comes to most of us when we dream of the lately dead—a feeling that though he stood there, living, breathing, death had only lent him, as it were, and was even now ready and waiting to claim his own once more.

Presently the old man spoke; he was repeating her own words—her words to Dick little more than an hour ago:

"Don't go away," he was saying; "don't go away from the old place; open that jar instead. Open the jar, Dick."

"What is in it?" asked Dick. "It must be something more potent than tobacco to be of any use to me, sir!"

"Look and see," said the old man; "look and see," and rapped the table impatiently with the heavy brass candlestick that stood near.

At the sound Mrs. Miles awoke. She

was sitting bolt upright in her chair, and rubbing her eyes, and still the knocking went on. Then it dawned upon her that the hand was at her own door.

"Come in!" she cried, and in walked the master of the house. He was trembling all over, his face—usually deep enough in hue—was ashen white. Had he too been dreaming of the dead? the housekeeper asked herself. But he was evidently holding a great restraint over himself, and anxious to hide as much as possible the excitement under which he laboured. He had been drinking—that, too, was evident; but for that it is more than probable his saner judgment would not have permitted him to go there at all just then.

"As it was, some shock, or what not, had partially sobered him, and he came towards the housekeeper steadily enough.

"Sit down, Mrs. Miles, sit down," he began. "No; I'll stand, thank you. The fact is, I came down here to speak to you, because—a—a—something is gone from my room, since I left it this morning, and I don't like things to go from my room—I don't choose things to go from my room, Mrs. Miles."

He looked at her with a look half fierce, half frightened. Mrs. Miles herself felt ill at ease. She knew in a moment what had happened; but she pulled herself together and nerved herself to face it.

"What is it, sir?" she said; "I will make enquiries."

Her hand was on the bell, but he stopped her with an oath. Then he recollected himself.

"No need to raise the house," he said quickly. "It is only a jar—my tobacco-jar, that has been taken from my cupboard. Who has been there, ma'am? that's what I want to know."

Something had got into Mrs. Miles's throat, and declined to be coughed out of it; when she managed to speak at last, her voice was very husky, her hands shook and rustled like dry leaves on her lap.

"Well, sir, I have been there."

"Yes, I dare say, Mrs. Miles; but you didn't take the jar, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, and I took the jar." It was not the old woman's hands alone that were shaking now; but she went on sturdily: "Mr. Richard has been here to-night—the jar was his, and I gave it him."

For the space of twenty seconds there was a horrible silence in the room; the housekeeper heard her own heart beating through it like a clock.

Then, with an awful oath, George Whympers sprang towards her. There was a choking sound, a crash that echoed through the empty passages beyond the room itself, and, with staring eyes and hands clutched wildly at his throat, the master of the Grange had fallen prone and lifeless at the old woman's feet.

CHAPTER V. THE DEAD SPEAK.

ONCE more the pair of lovers had the little schoolroom in the unfashionable square to themselves. It was their last meeting. Good-bye must be said to-night, last looks taken, last caresses given, for to-morrow would see them wide asunder—parted for how long?

Dick had brought the rescued tobacco-jar with him, and presented it, together with its history, to Fan.

"There," he said with a look of satisfaction, as he placed it on the mantelshelf before them, "it's just as I left it, tobacco and all. You keep it, Fan, till I come or send for you—my first pipe, with you to fill it, shall be from the old jar."

"Oh, Dick, dear Dick, will it be very long first, I wonder," and Fan stole a soft loving hand under Dick's strong arm.

They were standing side by side, her brown head nestling on Dick's shoulder. The young man looked tenderly down into the girl's wistful eyes.

"Long!" he cried cheerfully, "not a bit of it! Why, I shall work like any amount of niggers, and there will be no end of a place ready and waiting for you to come and look after it, before you have got your frocks and things ready."

"And you will send for me directly? You won't wait thinking the home isn't good enough, or grand enough, or anything of that sort? No matter how poor the place is, you will send for me, Dick?"

"Yes, yes," said Dick stoutly, "of course I will. How do you think I could live out there without you? And who knows what may happen," Dick went on glibly; "why, there is that old woman of mine down at the Grange, has quite made up her mind to see me back there again some day."

"What!" cried Fan eagerly, raising her head from Dick's stalwart shoulder.

"Well, you see, she has got an idea under that wonderful brown front of hers that the will is in existence somewhere, and that the king—meaning Dick Charlton, my dear—will come into his own again

some day. And what is more, she has made up her venerable mind that the present owner of the Grange, George Whymper, Esquire, to wit, has hidden it, and that she, Martha Miles, is going to find it—some day, as I have said."

Fan took her head from off Dick's shoulder altogether. Her eyes were sparkling, her pretty face was all aglow with excitement.

"And she is right, Dick; mark my words, Dick, she is right."

Dick shook his head.

"It is only an old woman's fancy, Fan," he said kindly. "We will try not to think any more about it, dear. Hark! how time is flying!" he cried as the old clock on the stairs gave out the hour with a solemn boom, "and we have still so much to say to one another."

Time was flying, indeed; it seemed but as if minutes had passed when again the clock's warning voice was heard.

"Ten!" cried Dick, "and I must be going. I start at daybreak, and I have still no end to do."

He was speaking cheerfully, even lightly, calling on all the man in him for her dear sake. The sparkle had fled from her eyes, the glow had died from her face, she stood looking at him white, tearless. He caught her in his arms, and held her there as if he could not let her go. Presently she gave a little trembling sob.

"Good-bye, dear, dear Dick," she cried softly, and broke from his embrace.

They had been standing close to the mantelshelf where the old jar stood; the door was at the side at Dick's left hand. He thought Fan was leaving him, running away from him, from the good-byes she could not speak, and put out his arms to stay her. And then—it was but the work of a moment—there was a fall, a crash, and the old tobacco-jar lay in fragments between them.

"Oh, Dick!" cried Fan, and was down on her knees upon the hearth-rug before Dick, dismayed, stupefied, had moved a limb.

"Get up, dear," he said at last, putting out a hand to raise her. "All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put it together again. It isn't worth troubling about; let me help you up."

But Fan didn't get up, nor in fact make any effort to do so. She did not even listen to what Dick was saying. She had picked up something from the ruins which was most certainly not tobacco, though plenty of that lay scattered about.

"What have you there?" Dick asked, finding she did not move; he bent over her as he spoke, and then he, big sturdy Dick, covered his face with his hands and broke into a great choking sob.

It was the missing will. It was brief enough, a sheet of ordinary paper held it all, but nothing more was needed.

Mrs. Miles was right after all, and the king had come into his own again! There were more loving embraces that wonderful night in the little school-room, followed by hand-shakings innumerable in the family sitting-room below, where supper cooled unnoticed; but there were no sobs to stifle, no farewells to speak, they were past and gone for ever, and a dozen lines in the old lawyer's familiar hand had done it all.

Tidings of what had happened at the Grange after his departure reached Richard Charlton the next day, but, beyond a thought of pity and forgiveness for the wretched man who had so wronged him, they could not affect him.

That George Whymper had found the missing will—where or how no one now could ever know—and failing courage to destroy it, had hidden it in the old tobacco-jar, the mere fact that the loss of the jar had so dismayed him was sufficient proof. That he had chosen it as a hiding-place not only likely to be safe from prying eyes, but where, if discovered, it could not possibly rise up in judgment against him, as it might have done elsewhere, no one doubted. Still less did any one care to sit in judgment on him. It might be that even he, poor sinner, would some day have found courage to restore to Dick his own, and set a great wrong right. Who could say?

And now how little more remains to tell. Richard Charlton went quickly down, and took possession of his own. It was winter then as we know; it was midsummer when Dick brought home his bride. The place lay steeped in the glory of a June sunshine when happy Mrs. Dick looked upon it for the first time. Trees and hedgerows wore their bravest mantles of greenery, as yet undimmed or scorched. Flower-beds gleamed, the very house itself looked smiling; all was brightness, warmth, and welcome.

As they alighted at the open doorway the church-bells rang out their loudest. Mrs. Miles, in a new and unblushing front of rich and youthful bronze, stood ready to receive them, proud, smiling. All she had

foretold had come to pass, and to crown it all was there not her dream ! But that, alas ! had most certainly not been received with all the wondering awe, not unmixed with admiration, which she had so fondly and without a doubt allowed herself to look for. It was the very top and pinnacle of her pride. What more could even a Joseph himself have accomplished in the way of a dream ?

And yet, unkindest cut of all, Master Dick, in whose behalf she had so distinguished herself, actually from the first declined to see anything at all wonderful in the matter, and furthermore went so far as to declare that it was, under the circumstances, the most natural dream in the world, and that the only astonishing part of it was that he had not dreamt it himself.

"I think it is I who was the clever one, Dick," to this day, whenever the subject is mentioned, laughingly declares Fan. "To break a tobacco-jar may be nothing so very out of the way, but to break it just 'in the nick of time !' that was the talented proceeding !"

OUTGROWN IT.

By ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

"You must enjoy the change from overcrowded London streets to the free and open country immensely, Mrs. Nesbitt ?"

Mrs. Nesbitt scowled at her interlocutor. He was a suave and amiable gentleman, the rector of the parish, and one of the kindest and most considerate of men. Yet here, to his dismay, he gathered from the expression of her face that he had ruffled the temper and aggrieved the spirit of his new parishioner at the outset of their intercourse.

"Why should you take it for granted that my sole acquaintance with the London streets was when they were overcrowded ?"

"To me, a country born and bred man, they are invariably so," he replied courteously, and he was about to set the conversation moving into another channel, when she brusquely interrupted him.

"And as for your 'free and open country,' I have found it already a prying, narrow, inquisitorial, rigid, detestable place."

"I should grieve at such a charge being brought against my parish, were it not

that I feel, when I know you better, I can refute it."

"Perhaps you will never know me better ; perhaps I may choose to keep you, as well as the rest of Horrafield, at arm's length."

Again she scowled defiantly at him, and he thought what a pity it was such a "personable woman" should possess such a diabolical temper.

"I will bide my time," he said pleasantly ; "in the meantime will you allow me, as a representative resident in this prying, narrow, inquisitorial, rigid, and detestable place, to offer you, the latest comer to it, the best of my poor services ? If I can be of use to you in any way pray command me."

The scowl was superseded by a smile that became her fair face much better.

"Do forgive me for laughing at you, but I can't help it. What can you possibly do for me that I haven't already done for myself ? I've a roof to cover me—a servant to cook for me—enough money to buy the necessaries of life in Horrafield. In fact I've amply provided for all my possible wants."

"You may want sympathy and a friend one day ; if you should do so——"

"I may send for you, I suppose you would add ; that's the right conventional thing for you, as parson of the parish, to say to any stranger. Well, the kindest thing you can do for me is to let me alone. I came here for peace and quiet. Let me have them."

She was so openly anxious for him to be gone, that Mr. Lyne felt there was but one course open to him. He took it, and departed. As he closed the garden wicket, he looked back at the little cottage which Mrs. Nesbitt had recently taken and furnished. The windows were all closely draped with Madras muslin and soft Indian silks.

"What whim has brought a woman with the means of surrounding herself with such luxuries, to such an out-of-the-way corner of the world ?" he asked himself. Then, still brooding over the subject, he took his way across the fields to dine with his cousin the squire, Clement Lyne, of The Hall.

Mr. Lyne had come into the property three years before this, but he had only taken up his abode at The Hall about two months before Mrs. Nesbitt came to puzzle his cousin the rector. The squire had been abroad a good deal, and in London a

little. Now he was coming down to live like a real country gentleman on his own estate, and there was a rumour that he would shortly be married.

He was a good-looking, agreeable man, and from the way in which he had begun ordering and arranging his household it was fairly assumed that he meant to live in a liberal style, and keep up the traditions of the Lynes of The Hall, who were valued exactly at the price of what they spent in the place.

His good looks were not of the order to cause any flutter in the female heart had he not been possessed of a good property. A short man, he was saved from being insignificant by his broad shoulders and erect, military bearing. His face was open and honest, and his eyes were a good grey—a colour through which a deceitful or untruthful soul rarely looks. But his nose was a decided snub with a marked want of bridge about it.

For the rest, he had a self-possessed pleasant manner, and dressed excellently. The neighbourhood was in doubt yet as to his sporting qualities, for he came to The Hall first in May. He rode a spirited horse quietly, which looked well, but still was not a sufficient guarantee of his being good after hounds. And he had a couple of favourite dogs, but as one was a big St. Bernard, and the other a little Dachshund, they gave no hint as to his sporting proclivities. So the neighbourhood had to wait till hunting and sporting began, to see what manner of man he was.

At The Hall all things remained in the same order as in the days of his predecessor. He made no additions to the furniture, and no alterations in the disposition of it. The same staff of servants who had served his uncle, the late squire, served him now in the same orderly way. The same quaint old-fashioned flowers and arrangements were maintained in the gardens. In fact, the only difference to be observed at The Hall was that the master was young instead of old.

Horrafield was not a remote village or townlet by any means. It was surrounded by waving cornfields, leafy woods, and rippling rivers it is true, and it was primitive in many of its habits and customs. As, for instance, it regarded its squire as a king of the place, and submitted to the unwritten law which declared his circle of friends and acquaintances to be the highest or court circle, into which it must neces-

sarily be the ambition of one and all to be admitted. It read with a sense of almost personal and pardonable pride that its county members had been at the Prime Minister's reception, the Home Secretary's dinner, or the Prince of Wales's levée. It revelled in every accurate little report in a local journal of the dress worn by either of the aforesaid county members' wives at Her Majesty's drawing-room. It believed in the superior flavour of its own trout over those of any other trout caught in known and civilised streams. It rather despised and pitied you if you didn't happen to have made the acquaintance of its Horradown-fed mutton. It liked to know the best and the worst, and, indeed, all the indifferent things too, that could be known about everyone who came to reside within its borders. But for all this it was not a remote or isolated village by any means, for it was within two hours of London, and had quite an attractive-looking little station at its southern extremity.

Mrs. Nesbitt had taken her little house from a London house-agent. She had furnished it from a London furnishing firm. She had come down alone, and stayed at the Horrafield Hotel for a few days, while her house was being arranged, during which time she had ingratiated herself so with the landlady as to induce the latter to secure one capable general servant for the strange lady. As this servant, in other respects a most superior person, could neither read nor write, Mrs. Nesbitt's correspondence were sealed books to her, therefore her interpretation of them revealed nothing to Horrafield.

"Her little house was a picture," the servant said, but no one had a chance of verifying the statement by a surreptitious inspection of any part of it except the kitchen; for when Mrs. Nesbitt went out she locked the doors of her sitting-rooms and bedroom, and put the keys beyond Mary's ken. Now this was a "way" for which no place that liked to have all things clear and above-board could have toleration.

When it was seen that she "looked and spoke quite like a lady," and discovered that there were no other means of finding out anything about her, all the upper ten of Horrafield called on her. But Mr. Lyne, the rector, was the only one who made the attempt successfully. The rest were baffled and beaten back from the door by the information either that she

was not at home, or that she was engaged and couldn't see any one.

Meanwhile the rumour grew in the village that Clement Lyne was about to be married to some lady unknown to Horrafield. Presently this rumour merged gradually into another and more definite one—he was to be married to little Miss Etherington, the only child of the rich City merchant who had lately bought and beautified an old mansion in the neighbourhood.

This last rumour had its birth in the fact of Mr. Lyne having told his gardener to go over to Holmlea (Mr. Etherington's place), to see some carpet-gardening arrangement which Mr. Etherington had much commended to his notice, and of his having dined twice with the new people.

"I think I've looked at her twice and spoken to her once," Clement Lyne said when his cousin told him of the rumour; "but I'm rather obliged to my neighbours for putting the idea in my head. She's not exactly what one would call pretty or remarkably prepossessing; but she has an amiable expression, and is very quiet and unpretentious. That in a girl who'll have the pile of money she'll have is some thing."

"It's not much by way of enthusiasm as regards marrying her," the rector remarked.

"No, you're right, Arthur," his cousin replied coolly; "but I exhausted all the enthusiasm I had on that subject many years ago, and I'm much obliged to gossip for once for having suggested little Miss Etherington to me."

To this the rector, having no suitable reply to make, made none, and the subject dropped between the two men for a time. But one evening when they were dining together, as was their frequent custom, Clement, who was the rector's guest on this occasion, observed:

"What a pretty crib you have here, old boy; better arranged and appointed in every way than The Hall. The only thing wanting to make it perfect is a mistress. How is it you've never given it one?"

"I thought of doing so in my curate days, but my uncle distinctly gave me to understand that if I married the lady I wanted to marry he would never give me this living. I didn't heed the threat a bit, but the lady did. She sent me about my business, and married a man who had patented a poker, or a pill, or something, and made a colossal fortune. Two or three years ago she wrote and asked me to take

two of her boys as pupils; 'the sum paid for their tuition might supplement my income agreeably,' she remarked. I declined to take the boys, and ceased to regret the woman. Try that trout; they're out of your own stream, but my cook manages them much better than yours."

The abrupt change in the conversation was due to the appearance of the rector's man. He was never oppressively present in the dining-room. Still there were moments when he felt that it behoved him as a man and a butler to change the plates, and fill the glasses.

When he vanished again for a brief period Clement Lyne said: "So my uncle dabbled and worked mischief in your affairs, too, with his idle interfering hands, did he? He did in mine to my awful discomfiture for years. My disappointment was put in with fiery colours; it's all paled and faded now, and I can't tell what has brought the memory of it back upon me vividly to-day; but it has been brought back, either by some sight or some sound—I can't tell which."

He paused, and his host looked politely interested.

"I'll tell you about it by-and-by, Arthur; I can't while Withers keeps popping in and out," the squire resumed animatedly. And so later in the evening he told his tale briefly.

"I was quartered at Knightsbridge, you know, the year before my uncle and I quarrelled, and he cut off my allowance, and so obliged me to sell out. And while I was there I went to a Sunday afternoon and evening entertainment at an establishment a famous actor and his wife had set up at Richmond. There was a queer mixture altogether of the aristocracy, art, literature, theatrical people, and military men, and I enjoyed it immensely, and lost the whole of my head and the best of my heart to a girl whom I thought very charming then, and think more charming now, when I recall her, and remember what she was."

"She was a bright, brilliant, well-bred girl, an evident favourite with the vast number of people who seemed to know her well, and beautiful with the beauty of youth, cleverness, vivacity, and goodness. I soon found out that she was an actress, a genuine, persevering, clever girl, who won every step she gained honestly by intelligence and assiduous study. Not a very rapidly rising or largely remunerated one,

but one who could take every farthing she made back to her mother, the widow with whom she lived, with a clear conscience and unblushing brow.

"She was of good family, of one that could hold its head well above my own with ease, and she led a merry, happy, double life, one with the swell relations who were rather fonder of her for relieving them of the onus of helping her and her mother, than they had been before she went on the boards, and the other the stage life and its inevitable associations and intimacies. She lived them both exquisitely, and I was the happiest fellow in the world the day I got her to promise to marry me.

"Then I wrote to my uncle in perfect confidence and hope. I knew I was dependent on him, but it never occurred to me as being within the bounds of possibility that an ignorant old provincial who knew little or nothing beyond the bounds of his own estate, who had difficulties with the English, and knew nothing of any other language, could 'object' to my marriage. I was mistaken. In an idiotic, ill-spelt letter he forbade me to entertain the idea of marrying a girl who had been a 'play-actress.' If I did, he vowed he would leave this place to the least deserving charity he could think of. I was fool enough to show it to Olive's mother, and to my horror I saw the moment after that the old lady's faith was shaken in me.

"However, I thought I could put that right directly I saw Olive. It was so thoroughly my set purpose to disregard the tyrannical, stupid old fellow's injunctions and threats, that I never thought of how they might goad and gall sensitive refined gentlewomen like Olive and her mother. By Jove! old boy, the speaking about these things makes them seem as if they only happened a few weeks ago; but it's seventeen years since I last saw Olive Vanthorne!

"I called several times, and always heard that the 'ladies were not at home.' I wrote to Olive, and my letters were not answered. I went to the theatre at which she was playing, and was told that by order of the manager 'none of the ladies' names or addresses were to be given to enquirers at the door.' Then I fell into a jealous fit of fury for a time, and ceased from my efforts to meet her, and teach her to treat my uncle's letter with the same indifference I did.

"One day, after about three months of this sort of work, I met Mrs. Vanthorne in Regent Street. She was crossing the pavement from Jay's to a brougham, and she couldn't evade me. She looked awfully distressed when she saw I was determined to speak to her, but I didn't care for that. 'Where is Olive?' I asked, taking off my hat, 'and why haven't you let me see her all this time, Mrs. Vanthorne?'

"The poor old lady seemed to crumble away as I asked these questions savagely, but she fetched up a smile from some diplomatic recess, and said:

"'My daughter is quite well—very well, indeed, and very happy, Mr. Lyne. You know, of course, that she is married!'

"With that she tried to step into the brougham, but I wouldn't let her do that.

"'Make an appointment with me, and give me an explanation, or I'll find your daughter, and get one from her,' I said. And she, unwillingly enough, made an appointment—and kept it! She wouldn't have done this last if she hadn't been afraid that I would have followed her daughter up and wrung one from her.

"She had to tell me the truth, for I was dangerously keen on the track of it. Her own pride, and her pride in her daughter, had been woefully wounded by that letter, and so she had concealed from poor Olive the fact of my even having ever called, and had intercepted my letters. In short, she had made Olive believe that I had given her up, and had stung her child into promising that she would have nothing more to do with me. All these things she had done out of mistaken motherly zeal and affection, and she asked for my sympathy and pardon on the plea that Olive had married comfortably and happily.

"I knew she loved her daughter, and I believe she felt sorry for me when she saw what a cut it was to me to hear all this. So I shook hands, and told her I believed she had done it all for the best. But I went away from the house a miserable, care-for-nought, reckless fellow, Arthur, and I remained the same for many a day.

"It's such an old story now, that I'm surprised at myself for telling it so well as I have told it to-night. Why, it's sixteen or seventeen years since I saw Olive! She must be nearly forty now; probably she has grown bulky and grey, and has

altogether forgotten that little summer romance of ours. I shall do a sensible thing in thinking of Miss Etherington."

"I think you will do well in being on with a new love, since you've been off with the old for so many years," the rector agreed. Then their thoughts veered round entirely to the present, and Clement Lyne was amazed by his cousin's account of the current mystery and topic of Horrafield—the stranger, Mrs. Nesbitt.

"I think, from your description of her, I must have seen her to-day. I met a ladylike woman in the lane that leads from the village to The Hall gardens. An unusual place to meet a stranger in, and an unusual face to see in Horrafield, I thought."

"An unusual woman altogether, in fact," Arthur Lyne replied. Then he told his cousin the manner of his own reception by Mrs. Nesbitt, and confessed that he would be shy of encountering a second edition of it.

One day soon after this, when Clement Lyne had ridden over to Holmlea in pursuance of that plan of his of cultivating Miss Etherington with the view of asking her to be his wife, an unexpected visitor appeared at The Hall and enquired for the housekeeper. It was Mrs. Nesbitt—the lady whose quiet life in Horrafield was making her the object of greater curiosity and suspicion than she would have called forth if she had recklessly risked boring herself to death by plunging into all of frivolity and gaiety that the neighbourhood afforded.

As a stranger in the place, she had taken the liberty of calling to ask to be allowed to see The Hall; she understood there were some very fine pictures.

The housekeeper bridled with satisfaction, and replied:

"As for showing the house, that had never been the custom; but if the lady liked to walk through and glance at the pictures, she was welcome to do it."

Mrs. Nesbitt did like to do it, and so walked in.

The pictures were very average ones, dubious Lelys, very "Young Pretenders" to the honoured names of Vandyke and Gainsborough. Mrs. Nesbitt looked at them critically, and cautiously concealed her opinion from the housekeeper, who was as jealous of their reputation as if she had painted them herself.

There was no picture-gallery. The pictures hung unpretentiously in the

drawing and dining rooms and in the big entrance-hall. When they had made the tour of these, the housekeeper said:

"There's master's own room I haven't shown you; if you'd like to walk in and look round, you're welcome."

With a faint flush on her fair face, Mrs. Nesbitt availed herself of the desired permission, and went into the room, half study, half smoking-room, where Mr. Lyne chiefly sat.

"It has the look of a bachelor's house altogether; it will be altered greatly, no doubt, when Mr. Lyne marries," Mrs. Nesbitt remarked, and the housekeeper replied:

"The master need be in no hurry; he's a well-looking man as you'll see anywhere. Still, there is a talk about Miss Etherington coming here; may be there's something in it, for master goes to Holmlea a great deal, but we all fancy this stands in the way."

As she spoke she drew back a velvet curtain, and displayed the portrait of a beautiful young woman, at sight of which Mrs. Nesbitt flushed still more deeply, and rearranged her veil.

"It seems to speak to you, don't it? the housekeeper said admiringly.

"It's enlarged from a photograph, I see," Mrs. Nesbitt said. Then she went over and looked steadily and closely at the likeness which had been taken seventeen years before of—herself!

It gave her a shock to look at what she knew she had been then, and to think of the difference in her now. Time had crept on, and the changes had been so gradual, that she had never realised till this moment how completely she was metamorphosed from the glowing beauty of that day into the merely graceful, nice-looking woman of this.

It was a revelation. And it made her long for another.

"Has he changed, too, I wonder?" she thought. "How handsome he was then! No! men wear better than women; his were not the kind of good looks that go soon. At forty a man is at his best, while a woman can only look back then upon her prime."

Then she asked the housekeeper if there was a photograph of the squire himself anywhere about, and was shown one with complacent pride by that dame.

Was this the slim, supple, ardent soldier-lover of her youth? Impossible! Here was a massive little man, with a broad good-humoured face, and a contented

commonplace expression! She put the photograph down with a quick sigh. All through these seventeen years, though she had been an exemplary wife and mother, she had nursed the memory of the lover she had left. And he had never changed! Her realised ideal, for that he had been in those happy engaged days, had always remained the same gallant-looking, handsome young fellow who had exchanged love for love with her on that first day of their meeting at Richmond.

The change in him shocked her more even than the one in herself had done. She went away back to the little house which she had adorned with such taste, and admitted to herself that she need take no further precautions to keep herself undiscovered by him. All the little elaborate fabric of romance which she had been building up was dashed to pieces in a moment.

It had been her purpose to come to Horrafield, and find out whether her old lover was either married or thinking of marriage. If he were neither, she had intended gently to reveal herself to him one day. But the rumour about Miss Etherington had first made her defer her purpose. And now the sight of herself as she had been, and of him as he was, made her relinquish it.

After the first shock of these discoveries had passed over, Mrs. Nesbitt speedily recovered, and was able to laugh at herself for having felt them so keenly. Her two daughters were coming down to her soon, fresh from their school near Paris. It had been in her mind that they might have the surprise of hearing they were to have a step-father and a home at The Hall. But this design was changed now. She would only give them the benefit of the fresh country air for a few weeks, make herself known to and have a chat with Clement Lyne, for auld lang syne's sake, and then leave Horrafield and the old romance for ever behind her.

What a fool she had been! This was the reflection that would keep on recurring. Ten years ago, when her husband had died, leaving her well off, and with two tiny daughters, she had made a resolution—she had almost vowed a vow—that nothing should ever tempt her to give her girls a step-father. That resolution was made when she was still young enough to look upon the making of it as a merit. That resolution was made when she was still pretty enough to make it more than probable

that men would endeavour to make her break it.

But the memory of her good, kind, indulgent husband had been very fresh in her mind, and the memory of Clement Lyne, of whom she had heard nothing for seven years, had paled. And so she had been very sensible!

But just a few months ago thoughts of old times had been strongly stirred within her by seeing in some newspaper that Clement Lyne, late of Her Majesty's —th Regiment, had succeeded to the estates of his late uncle, Arthur Lyne, of Horrafield Hall, Middleshire.

She happened to be very much disengaged at the time; her daughters had just gone back to school; London was emptying itself; there was no special call made upon her to move in any other direction; and, acting on an impulse at which she was very much inclined to laugh now, she had come down to Horrafield with the intention of taking quiet observations of her old lover, and seeing what manner of man he had grown.

She had done this without any defined ultimate object. It had occurred to her that it would be pleasant if he recognised her without aid, and they two should hold friendly converse together again. The name of Nesbitt would be no clue to him; her husband had been Graves when she married him, and had changed his name to Nesbitt on succeeding to some property.

But when once she found herself in Horrafield, she found that she could only hope to meet with a genuine recognition from him by guarding against the inquisitiveness of the village. If Horrafield, in its eagerness to find out who she was and where she came from, and why she was there, lighted upon anything that might reveal her to him before her own time for doing so, or rather before he spontaneously remembered her, then she would be disappointed and disgusted. Thinking this she shut herself up rigorously, as we have seen—ostrich-like, believing that if she wouldn't see anybody, nobody would see her.

Now the futility of this proceeding made itself painfully manifest to her; he might meet her face to face and not recognise her, for there was nothing visible left of the beautiful girl she had been, in the pleasant-faced woman merely which she had become.

She decided at last to lose no more

time in bringing about just one friendly meeting with him, and then in leaving Horrafield. Towards this end she sent for the rector.

"You see I want a friend sooner than I thought I should," she said, receiving him very graciously.

"And your face tells me that you want one for some agreeable object," he replied. "I am at your service, Mrs. Nesbitt; pray command me."

"Bring your cousin, the great man of the village, to call upon me."

"I will do so with pleasure if I can catch him in an hour of freedom. But he's scarcely his own master just now; he has got engaged to a lady, who monopolises a good deal of his time."

She could not help colouring a little when she heard this; not that she wanted him herself, but—it is never nothing to a woman to learn that a man who might have been her property once had she willed it, has bestowed himself upon another woman now.

"Indeed! I suppose it's a subject of local rejoicing that The Hall is to have a mistress?"

"It is, especially such a one as Miss Etherington will be. She's very wealthy and very liberal, and Horrafield looks forward hopefully to there being lavish expenditure at The Hall, and a great impetus being given to trade in the village."

"I should like to see Clement before he marries," she said absently, and the rector looked up quickly.

"You have known my cousin?"

She smiled and nodded.

"You haven't seen him for many years?"

"Not for more than seventeen."

"Your name was Olive Vanstone, if I'm not much mistaken?"

"Then he has spoken to you of me?" she asked eagerly; "did he speak kindly? has he lost all feeling of anger against me for having let myself be wax in my poor mother's hands?"

"He's a prosaic middle-aged man, you must remember, Mrs. Nesbitt," the rector said, with a vivid recollection of Miss Etherington and her claims.

"And I am a prosaic middle-aged woman," she answered promptly; "but I am capable of feeling anger still if I think I have been unfairly treated, and he had good reason for thinking that I treated him unfairly in those bygone days. He didn't know how my poor mother pressed me;

he didn't know that I was made to believe for a long time that he was as ready to relinquish me as his uncle could desire."

"And now such knowledge can do no good, and may do harm," the rector urged. "He has got engaged to this young girl now; don't you think you had better leave her in undisturbed possession?"

She smiled and shook her head.

"I haven't the vanity to suppose for an instant that I could upset her claims; she has youth on her side, remember."

"Many men prefer the second summer to the first," he said gallantly.

"Then many men have very bad taste. No, Mr. Lyne, you need be under no apprehension concerning your cousin's fidelity to his new vows. I only want to see him and shake hands with him before I leave Horrafield."

"If you'll only permit me to try and make Horrafield a little more agreeable to you, perhaps you might be induced to stay longer," Mr. Lyne said earnestly. "I've grown so accustomed to the look of the outside of this house under your treatment that it will be quite a blow to me to see other people's cruder curtains and blinds."

"There's a veiled reproach in that remark of yours," she said gaily; "you've grown so accustomed to the look of the outside of the house! Well, in future, while I stay here, I hope you'll grow accustomed to the look of the inside of it also."

"You'll find that I take you at your word; and now tell me why have you, who are so unsuited to the part of a recluse, been playing it all this time?"

"I wanted to meet Clement accidentally, and be recognised by him without an introduction; but the other day the fallacy of entertaining such a hope was shown me. I went up to The Hall as an ordinary British sight-seer, and the housekeeper took me to look at a portrait of Olive Vanstone seventeen years ago."

"That's the likeness of the lovely girl he has in his study?"

"Yes," she laughed; "and even after hearing one story from him, and now hearing it from me, you've never associated me with that portrait till the present moment; now have you, confess?"

"Well, I hardly——"

"You hardly like to tell the truth about the matter. I am changed indeed!"

"And so is Clement."

"Oh, he's altered terribly," Mrs.

Nesbitt cried heartily. Then she added :
" You and he are not a bit alike."

" When we were boys together we were thought to be so by some people."

" Boys together ! Why, Clement must be years and years older than you."

" I am his junior by a year only," said Mr. Arthur Lyne, blushing a little. He was an extremely good man, with very little of the thoroughly manly attribute of vanity about him. Still, it gave him agreeable sensations to hear an attractive woman speak of him as years and years younger-looking than his cousin.

Meanwhile, Clement Lyne had fully committed himself in the eyes of all men to marry Miss Etherington.

The lady was, as the rector had said of her, " quite young ;" but, somehow or other, " youthfulness" was not what a sight of her or a knowledge of her suggested. She was, as Clement Lyne had said once, " quiet and unpretentious," and she was these things to a really remarkable degree. In society she always appeared to shrink from notice, and her gentle retiring ways won her a good deal of approbation from people who thought her temptations to be arrogant and assertive must be strong indeed.

But the fact was the great heiress laboured under the mortifying conviction that she was only of value in the world as the future owner of vast riches. She was keenly conscious of having no peculiar personal or mental merits, and she was always trying to picture the different kind of treatment she would receive from mankind and the world at large, if she should suddenly have to pose as a pauper before them. She had, during the brief period which had elapsed since her " coming out," received several offers of marriage, and all these she had refused with promptitude and decision, firmly believing that it was her money and not herself that they wanted.

But when Clement Lyne came in his prosaic semi-paternal way, she found herself strongly moved towards him. It was borne in upon her that here was an honest sincere man who really thought that she could make him happy, and who valued that happiness more than he did her money-bags. In a plain, straightforward way he asked her to be his wife, telling her that her fresh, unsullied, unhackneyed youth was her greatest charm in his eyes, and frankly avowing that he knew himself to be too old to win anything like ardent

love from her in return. But little Miss Etherington, though she answered him very quietly and undemonstratively, felt that she was quite prepared to give him all this which he said he could never expect.

She had grown to have such a nervous dread of being married for her money, that the sight of his genuine indifference to the settlements was a source of profound satisfaction to her. For himself, he had quite enough, and for the rest, " tie it up tightly on herself and her children," he said to his future father-in-law, who obeyed him to the letter.

He came back one evening to dine with his cousin Arthur, after having spent several hours with his quiet little betrothed and her parents, settling some of the arrangements that had to be made for their wedding-day, and the gentle timidity of her character had never been so apparent to him before.

" She's as restful as twilight," he said to his cousin. " I feel that she will make my life a very peaceful and happy one ; in fact she's exactly the sort of woman that's best suited to me ; time was when I thought very differently," and he smiled at a recollection of brilliant, vivacious Olive Vanstone.

Here was the opportunity which the rector almost persuaded himself he had been waiting for, for several days.

" Do you think you would like to know Mrs. Nesbitt ?" he asked rather constrainedly, leaning over the arm of his chair, and playing with his dog as he spoke, so that the expression of his face was concealed from his cousin.

" Who, I ? yes, I don't care about it ; but if you'll introduce me—— By the way, Arthur, isn't this rather a sudden change ? The lady and you haven't been on visiting terms, have you ?"

" No ; but she sent for me the other day to do her a trifling favour, and in the course of conversation she said she would like to see you ; in fact I promised to take you there. What do you say to calling this evening ?"

" Rather late, isn't it, for a stranger to call ?"

" I don't think you'll find she'll treat you as a stranger," Arthur Lyne said in some embarrassment. He had made no promise to Mrs. Nesbitt not to reveal her to his cousin, and yet he could not bring himself to do it. He staved off what he thought an evil discovery till the last

moment, and altogether felt strangely averse to playing the part of medium which Mrs. Nesbitt had assigned him.

By-and-by they strolled down through the village to Mrs. Nesbitt's door, Clement all the while expatiating on the twilight charm which there was about his bride-elect, and Arthur praying fervently that no cloud might arise out of to-night's meeting to obliterate that twilight charm.

"Why couldn't she have let well alone till he was safely married?" the rector thought, and he felt aggrieved with Mrs. Nesbitt for her want of patience.

The blind was up and the window was open when they went into the little sitting-room. But a lamp stood on a small table, and full in the light of this lamp Mrs. Nesbitt was seated, with a couple of young girls on low stools at her feet.

What the two gentlemen saw was a very winsome woman, distinctly "no longer young," Clement Lyne thought. "A fair presence to have in a house," thought his cousin.

She had not expected to see them this evening, and her newly-arrived and much-grown young daughters were engrossing all her mind and thoughts. In her anxiety to show her children to him, Mrs. Nesbitt quite forgot that her former lover was utterly unprepared to meet her.

"I'm so glad to see you again, Clement," she said, rising up and stretching out a hand in hearty greeting over the bright heads of her children; "so glad to see you, especially to-night. My little girls came home yesterday, and I want you to know them."

He took the hand she held out to him, and gazed into her face in amazement. Something in the fair face, something in the sudden bright sparkle of the blue eyes, something in the sweet influence of the voice, recalled "someone" to him. But who that "someone" was he could not determine immediately.

She realised that he had utterly forgotten her, in an instant, and did not feel offended, or even hurt. One little bit of effect she could not resist attempting.

"Get up, Olive," she said to the elder of the two young girls at her feet; "perhaps you will recall me to Mr. Lyne's recollection more successfully than I have been able to do it myself."

Then, as the young girl sprang laughingly to her feet, and confronted him, Time seemed to have stood still; little twilight Miss Etherington was forgotten, and he

thought he was looking on his own old love again.

As the days went by, the two who had been so much to one another once, and who had so utterly outgrown all softer feeling for one another now, found the renewal of their intercourse a very pleasant thing.

The squire came to the widow's house constantly, always accompanied by his cousin, the rector, who soon ceased to feel anxious as to the result, as far as Mrs. Nesbitt was concerned. The engaged man was able to face the widow—his own old love—and feel conscience-free; and she in her turn merely marvelled at herself for having so thoroughly outgrown the passion and romance of her youth. But how about Olive, the younger?

Now that she saw him daily, Mrs. Nesbitt was fain to confess that she had done Clement Lyne injustice, in looking upon him as a mere massive, uninteresting, commonplace little man. He had nothing Apollo-like about him, but he had that perfect bearing, that thoroughbred, exquisitely-balanced manner, which runs the Apollos hard. No wonder that, young as she was, little Miss Etherington had been taken by such a man!

Perhaps Mrs. Nesbitt would have thought more about little Miss Etherington's publicly-proclaimed rights, and have been a little more observant of her old lover, if all this time his cousin had not been engrossing so much of her attention. As it was, with soft, half-shamed blushes, she was obliged to confess to herself that she was going through the same phase of feeling now for Arthur which she had once long ago gone through for Clement, and she felt thankful indeed that, before they had met, Clement had bound himself to little Miss Etherington.

"It will end in your going to the rectory, I see that," her eldest daughter said to her laughingly one day, when Mr. Lyne had been spending a couple of hours, on the weakest pretences, in their sitting-room; and this speech was another revelation to Mrs. Nesbitt. Her daughter had reached the age when the idea of matrimony for themselves or others becomes familiar to the mind.

"You child! don't talk of things you don't understand. Mr. Lyne is a very good friend of mine——"

"Don't I understand?" Olive interrupted. "In your wisdom, mother dear, don't overlook the fact that you are a very much more attractive woman than can be

found in all the region round. Clement Lyne has told me that over and over again. How nice he is, mother—so fond of you too. He says to see me growing more like what you were every day is the greatest pleasure he has in life.”

“Clement’ Lyne! The greatest pleasure he has is to see you growing more like me! My dear child, let me collect my startled senses, and tell you that you mustn’t speak of a man old enough to be your father”—she shivered a little as she said it—“by his christian-name. Like him and revere him as much as you like, but please—please, my Olive, don’t take up the tone of the day, and speak in a free-and-easy, jaunty kind of way of a man so much your senior—a man, too, who is shortly to be married.”

Olive’s impressionable soul was quick to mark a change of feeling on her face.

“Mother, mother dear, you don’t think him so very old, do you? and I’m not quite sure that he is going to be married to Miss Etherington, after all. They’re both beginning to feel that they’ve made a mistake. People do sometimes in love-affairs, you know, mother. There’s an amount of simpleness about her that almost amounts to silliness, I should think, from what he says.”

“I’ll speak to him; I’ll tell him he mustn’t speak to the child about his future wife. Olive is so young that no mischief can have been done yet,” the mother thought.

Then she reproached herself for having suffered that autumnal dream of hers to interfere with her strict supervision of her daughter.

But when Mrs. Nesbitt, acting under advice from the rector, did begin to mildly reprove and softly upbraid Clement Lyne for having talked nonsense to her child, he astonished her by saying:

“It’s the best sense I’ve talked for seventeen years. It has made Olive care for me, and Olive is too much like her mother not to have a heart worth winning and keeping. It’s a strange end to our story that you should marry my cousin, and that I should marry your daughter; but it is to be, Mrs. Nesbitt.”

“And what about Miss Etherington?” she faltered.

This sudden re-disposition of affairs, though not exactly displeasing, was distinctly startling to her.

“Miss Etherington is one of the best little creatures that ever lived. She will

give me her hand and wish me God-speed in my wooing of Olive, as you will do presently.”

A fine colour came into Mrs. Nesbitt’s face as he said this. For the world she would not have reminded him that he had spoken the same words about herself to her mother long ago. Her delicacy was spared something in that he evidently did not remember it. Her pride compelled her to say:

“Until you can come a free man, you mustn’t see Olive, you mustn’t come here. I shall reproach myself always with having brought sorrow upon Miss Etherington.”

“Ah,” he said with unintentional cruelty, “your daughter is so like what you were, how could I fail to love her? Wish me well with her; rely on me. Miss Etherington will not even feel greatly disappointed; she doesn’t feel anything deeply. Hers is a very sweet, but not at all an intense nature. Let me see Olive to-day; let me plead my cause with her.”

“Not till you can plead it as a free man,” the mother said decidedly. “Olive is too precious to me to let her be lightly won. When you come as a free man to ask for my child I will give her to you, if she is willing. Meanwhile, act as a man should. Let there be no go-betweens. See Miss Etherington; let no messages pass between you and her. A man is false to his manhood who lets any human being intervene between himself and the woman he loves.”

That was the only reproach she ever spoke to him, the only rebuke she ever gave him for his having inertly allowed her to slip out of his life.

“But I don’t love Miss Etherington in that way,” he explained; and then again he pleaded warmly for a few minutes with Olive. “Let me be sure of her,” he asked.

“No, indeed,” she answered; “that you shall never be till she stands at the altar with you. Oh, you are weak! You let the women you love and the women who love you go with equal facility.”

“If Olive ever goes from me it will kill me,” he said passionately.

“Have the courage to say that to Miss Etherington. If you have the courage to do that I shall not fear to trust Olive to you. Child as she is, she will admire your pluck.”

“Child as she is, she is the one object in the world to me,” he said; “and so

I shall find the courage to tell Miss Etherington."

"Here comes your cousin," the widow said, relapsing into a gentler mood. And while the rector talked to Mrs. Nesbitt, Clement Lyne made his escape into the little garden behind the house, and admired Olive's supple grace as she swung herself about in a hammock.

Little Miss Etherington had got her wedding-garments together, and quite banished that life-long delusion of hers about being married for her money. She had grown, since her engagement to Clement Lyne, to have a far higher opinion of herself than she had ever entertained before.

He was so absolutely true and sincere in all his dealings, that it was impossible to doubt the flattering fact of his truth and sincerity in loving her for herself—not for that alluring bugbear, her money. If such a man loved her for herself, why then she must indeed be well worth loving. So without growing one whit less gentle or one atom more pretentious, she grew into a more correct appreciation of herself under the influence of Clement Lyne's truth, sincerity, and general superiority.

In the first days of the renewal of his acquaintance with Mrs. Nesbitt he had told his betrothed that in that lady he had found an old friend. But, prudently, he had not thought it necessary to add that the old friend and he had once been on the brink of marrying one another. It is always quite as well, perhaps, that men should keep these bygone incidents in the background, and no one can impugn Clement Lyne's truth and sincerity for doing so on this occasion.

But when it revealed itself to him that Olive, the younger, was getting dearer to him than her mother had ever been—was getting dangerously dear, then indeed it behoved him either to confess the painful truth to little Miss Etherington, or to cease seeing Olive.

He did neither.

At last, when more than a week had passed without his either writing to or seeing Miss Etherington, there came a letter from her which compelled him to be honest at last, and definite.

Without her having told him so, he knew very well that Olive Nesbitt, the daughter of his first love, had given all her gracious young heart to him, and the

gift was too precious to him for him to throw it away. So when little Miss Etherington wrote in her confiding simplicity:

"I wish you would come over to dine to-night. As we are to be married so soon, my mother thinks we ought to settle definitely where we will go for our trip. Besides, dear Clement, I want to make my wedding-present to you before we are married."

In spite of his heart's desire being given him about Olive, Clement Lyne was a very miserable man as he drove over to Holmlea that day. In spite of what may appear like fickleness, he was a very kind-hearted man, and he did dread the moment when Miss Etherington's dove-like eyes should be opened to the truth.

She was walking about on the lawn with her mother when he arrived, and as he went towards them, she came forward with the shy trusting manner that he had found so infinitely touching at first. When she held up her face for him to kiss her, he was sorely tempted to do it, and defer the disagreeable disclosure. But he thought of Olive and refrained, and Miss Etherington drew back, feeling rebuffed and repelled, and strangely hurt.

"I will leave you in peace," Mrs. Etherington said, smiling; "don't shut your ears to the dinner-bell, please." Then she went in, and the moment was come.

"I have a sorrowful confession to make," he began. She looked at him wistfully, but said nothing, and he had to go on. "I have to ask you to release me from my promise. You deserve the best love of a man's heart. The best love of mine is given to a girl whom I have only known since I asked you to be my wife. Forgive me."

She put her hand out, and laid it on his.

"Go to her, my friend," she said softly; "it must have been hard for you to tell me. You shall not see my father and mother yet. When you come back to Horrafield with your wife they shall come with me to see her, and the wedding-present I have shall be given to her—not to you."

Then she said good-bye to him, and went in, and he got himself away from Holmlea, feeling out of joint with himself.

When, some time after, he brought his

wife home, he found that the Etheringtons had gone abroad, but little Miss Etherington had left her wedding-present for Olive.

Mrs. Nesbitt remains in Horrafield, and the rectory is not likely to lack a mistress long.

THE PURRINGTON TRAGEDY.

By DUTTON COOK.

I.

PURRINGTON boasted but one police-constable, and, of course, he was very much disturbed: indeed it may be said of the whole neighbourhood that it was extremely excited: when news suddenly came of the death of Farmer Bickerstaff. He had been found lying prone on the open down nearly two miles away from his own farmhouse. There was an ugly cut across his face, there were several wounds at the back of his head, and it was plain that he had been bleeding profusely. He was quite cold, had been dead many hours, it was said, when some of his own labourers came with a cart to carry the body home.

It was not surprising that Purrington was so deeply stirred; such an event had not been known to happen out Purrington way, as people said, within the memory of its oldest inhabitant, who by-the-bye was known to be old Gaffer Grimshaw, an inmate of the poorhouse, and generally reputed to be aged at least one hundred and three years. As a rule, indeed, nothing of much moment ever did happen out Purrington way, and its policeman was wont to have an easy time of it; for Purrington was but a peaceful little West-of-England village that usually seemed to be curled up and fast asleep in a comfortable hollow of the down country that outstretched and undulated far and wide thereabout. It claimed to own historical interest, however: the Romans had encamped on its uplands, and Druidical remains had been discovered in its vale. Moreover, it had been a posting-station in the good old coaching times; and in its high street a market had formerly been held, bestowing upon it the dignity of a town; and at one time it had returned a member to Parliament; but, of course, that was all a long time ago now.

Mr. Spreadberry, the policeman of Purrington, now found himself quite a per-

sonage. Hitherto he had represented justice only in a small way and in relation to her meaner affairs. He had been called upon to deal merely with what are known as "common assaults," with instances of rude tipsiness outside the taprooms of the village inn; he had arrested turnip-stealers and trespassers here and there, and been as a scourge to the small boys who threw stones, broke windows, and otherwise misconducted themselves and vexed society. But here was something very much more serious to occupy him. He had been engaged only in the lighter entertainments of the criminal law; but the death of Farmer Bickerstaff was in the nature of real heavy tragedy. The agitated villagers gathered round the policeman, hung upon his words, watched and followed him hither and thither. How had poor old Farmer Bickerstaff come by so dreadful an end? That was the question. Was it accident? or was it suicide? or was it murder? The policeman's aspect was imposing and portentous, but unsatisfying. He would say little of the farmer's death; he simply described it as "a case." But to some minds there was consolation even in this brief and narrow account of the matter; a legal heaven and flavour seemed thus imparted to it.

Of course the magistrates of the district had been roused and consulted with, the while a message had been despatched to the coroner for the county. For it was clear there must be an inquest upon the body of the deceased farmer. Mr. Partlett, the general practitioner of Purrington, who had assisted so many of its inhabitants into the world, and at times possibly had hastened the departure thence of some of them, had been summoned to the Abbey Farm to view the remains and testify to the cause of death. It was reported, too, that Dr. Bloomfield of Steepleborough had also been sent for, that a second opinion on the subject might be forthcoming. There were those who hinted that Mr. Partlett was not so young or so sharp as once he had been; it was even suggested that he was now a trifle gone-by, that he had not all his wits always about him, but was wont at times to let them go too far a-wool-gathering.

As tenants of Lord Hengistone, of The Abbey, Purrington West, members of the Bickerstaff family had occupied the Abbey Farm during a long course of years. There had always been a Bickerstaff, it was said, upon the Hengistone estate. The country

side had been rather proud of the Bickerstaffs, and especially of the unfortunate man who was now lying disfigured by his wounds, stark and dead, in his own farmhouse. Not that he could have been called popular. He was known to be a man of violent temper, obstinate, opinionated, overbearing, quarrelsome. It was not only, his neighbours admitted, that he owned a "rough side to his tongue;" he had been wont to follow up hard words with hard blows. He had been brought before the bench of magistrates upon more than one occasion for assaulting sundry of his farm-servants, plying his horsewhip too freely, and inflicting personal chastisement upon those who had offended him. He was a man to make enemies and was no doubt here and there held in hearty detestation. And yet he was regarded as somehow a credit to the district. He was an excellent agriculturist, his farm had often been described as "a perfect picture." He had been the recipient of many a prize at the county cattle-shows for his ram-lambs or his stock sheep. He rode well to hounds; he was an admirable shot; he was skilled in all manly sports and exercises. And then, time out of mind, the Bickerstaffs had possessed great physical advantages. The late farmer had been famed for his tall stature, for his singular muscular strength, for his handsome face and figure. Even at seventy years of age Jasper Bickerstaff with his keen clear blue eyes, his abundant white hair, his ruddy complexion, and his firm and upright bearing, could only have been described as a very comely and picturesque-looking elderly gentleman.

II.

The coroner's jury returned an open verdict. It seemed clear that Mr. Bickerstaff had been thrown from his horse and had fallen very heavily. There was a heap of flints close by; similar heaps indeed at intervals marked out a bridle-path across the down, the farmer's shortest way home. It was likely that the horse had shied at the flints, or had stumbled over them, with a suddenness that had unseated the rider. It was late and very dark. Mr. Bickerstaff had been attending Steepleborough Market; had dined at the Farmers' Club, and remained there some hours playing cards. It was added that he had been drinking freely, though no witness ventured to say that he was drunk. The horse was young, and Mr. Bickerstaff was known to

ride carelessly with a loose rein. He had left Steepleborough alone; he had not been met on the road home. It was about five miles from the club-house door to the place where the body was found, which was not, perhaps, more than two hundred yards from the highway. There had been a toll-gate formerly standing where the bridle-path joined the broad open road; but the gate-house had been years since converted into a labourer's cottage, the toll having been abolished, and the turnpike trust brought to an end. In the cottage dwelt with his mother, one Jacob Haggard, a carter in the employ of Farmer Bickerstaff. On the night in question Jacob Haggard, it was shown, was up at the Abbey Farm, busied in the stables, attending upon one of the horses in his charge—the animal had gone dead lame in the course of the afternoon. It was Jacob who found the farmer's nag, much cut about the knees, shivering and scared, with a staring coat, standing riderless without the porch of the Abbey farmhouse. It was Jacob who started with a lantern across the down, along the bridle-path, in search of the missing farmer. To Jacob it was plain, from the condition of the nag, that something had happened to his master. It was Jacob who, having found the farmer's body, hurried in a very unnerved and tremulous state to rouse certain of his fellow farm-servants, to prepare and bring forth one of the farm-carts, and to convey the dead man to his home.

The evidence of the medical witnesses was thought to be rather vague and unsatisfactory. The doctors seemed unwilling to commit themselves to any very distinct opinion. Was an accidental fall the main cause of the farmer's death? That might be so. Or had the deceased been seized with apoplexy? It was possible; Mr. Bickerstaff had suffered from something like an apoplectic attack some few years ago, when Mr. Partlett had prescribed for him. The wounds on the face were not sufficient to account for the farmer's death. They were caused apparently by violent contact with the sharp edges of the flints. Supposing the farmer to have been suddenly thrown from his horse upon the heap of sharp jagged flints, the medical witnesses would have expected to find just such wounds upon his face. No; suicide was out of the question; the witnesses were quite agreed and confident as to that. As it was clear from the cuts upon its knees that the nag had stumbled and gone down,

it might be assumed that the farmer had lost his seat and been thrown. At the same time there was nothing to account for the wounds on the back of his head. The skull was severely fractured. It was as though it had been battered in by some heavy blunt instrument. They were not incised wounds; they differed from the wounds on the face. They could hardly have been effected by a heavy fall on the flints, even supposing that the farmer had fallen on the back of his head. Did they think then that Mr. Bickerstaff had been murdered? The witnesses would not take upon themselves to say that in their opinion Mr. Bickerstaff had been murdered. Still he might have been murdered? Yes; assuredly he might have been murdered. The wounds on the back of his head could not have been self-inflicted? No; the witnesses thought that such wounds could not have been self-inflicted.

The inquest had been held in the large upper room of The King's Head Inn, Purrrington, the jury having been driven over in an omnibus to view the body of the deceased at the Abbey Farm. The excitement at Purrrington was very great throughout these proceedings. There was much hurrying to and fro, riding and driving hither and thither. There was a line of dog-carts and pony-chaises ranged in front of The King's Head, and the stables of that establishment were subjected to excessive crowding.

An open verdict was, perhaps, unavoidable, especially as the coroner, an elderly gentleman who lived many miles away and was very anxious to return home in good time, afforded the jury but little guidance or assistance in the matter, but chiefly concerned himself with abbreviating the proceedings. An open verdict satisfies no one, however. It was felt generally that the coroner's jury had left the case very much where they found it, and that something further ought to be done. There were many who said in plain terms that Farmer Bickerstaff had been murdered and that it behoved the authorities to look alive, to discover and punish his murderer. A feeling that there had been in some sort a failure of justice was even visited upon the Purrrington policeman, who now found himself, in his character of representative of the law, somewhat discredited and under-estimated. The Purrrington people seemed to hold that they knew quite as much about the case of Farmer Bickerstaff as did Mr. Spreadberry; some even judged

that they knew more about it than he did, and were ready to taunt him with his inertness, to accuse him of lack of sagacity and perception. Sometimes he was plainly asked why he did not arrest somebody? To this enquiry, which was not perhaps one of much fairness or soundness, Mr. Spreadberry could return no satisfactory answer.

It was understood that the magistrates of the district had sat in conclave upon the case and had been in receipt of communications from the Home Secretary. A rumour prevailed that the bench had been stirred up and called to account by that member of the Government. It was not clear, however, that the justices had not been the first to move in the matter and of their own accord sought the aid of the Secretary.

III.

The arrival of a stranger was always an event in Purrrington; but when it was known that the stranger could be described as "an emissary from Scotland Yard," the interest originally taken in his visit gradually rose to excitement. Presently he stood confessed as Mr. Dawkins, of the detective police—a middle-sized, middle-aged man, portly of form and good-humoured of facial expression, with little crescent-shaped patches of whisker defining the position of his cheek-bones. He came over unexpectedly in a fly from Steepleborough, bringing little luggage with him, and avoiding the more pretentious King's Head, contented himself with the inferior accommodation obtained at The Barley Mow public-house. He first appeared in a tall hat and a long brown overcoat, but speedily discarding these, he was found arrayed in a grey suit, with a "pot" hat, and had the air of an innocent excursionist quietly enjoying the fresh breezes blowing from the downs about Steepleborough.

Mr. Dawkins, however, was a very distinguished officer of police. He had acquired signal fame by his adroit dealing with such criminal cases of note as the great forgeries upon the Royal Bank of Sark, the Peckham Rye murder, the extraordinary kidnapping at Romney Marsh, the robbery of Lord Beamish's gold plate and Lady Belzize's jewels, etc. Undoubtedly Mr. Dawkins had displayed great judgment, courage, and enterprise on many important occasions.

The London officer soon made the acquaintance of Purrrington's only con-

stable, and treated him with much cordiality. While disposed to hold that the metropolitan police generally were perhaps rather an over-valued and somewhat arrogant body—"bumptious," he termed it—Mr. Spreadberry freely admitted that Mr. Dawkins was a pleasant man, of affable address, and very good company. Mr. Dawkins was welcomed to Mr. Spreadberry's lodgings, and was there made very comfortable with a pipe of the church-warden pattern and a tumbler of whisky-and-water, cold. Mr. Dawkins was a man of much conversation, many topics; he by no means confined himself to discussing the case of Farmer Bickerstaff, though he now and then, as it were, dropped into that in an accidental manner and increased his stock of knowledge concerning it.

He was London-born himself, Mr. Dawkins confessed, but he owned relations on his mother's side who were Norfolk people. Perhaps it was to that fact his interest in agricultural matters was attributable; for he loved the country. He enjoyed nothing so much as "an outing" among green trees, and hills, and lanes; had always from a boy taken a sort of interest in farming operations, and often wished he had been brought up to be a farmer. They farmed in Norfolk upon a different system to that prevailing about Purrington: he knew that much. Yet he thought the crops about Purrington—take the barley on Farmer Bickerstaff's land, for instance—wonderfully promising; he could see that with half an eye, Londoner though he was. Farmer Bickerstaff was no doubt very well served by his labourers. Only pretty well? Mr. Dawkins would have thought such a man had been particularly well served. Not so very popular? Wasn't he now. Not considered a good master? Mr. Dawkins was surprised. "Hard-mouthed, cold-hearted, and close-fisted." Was that what they said of him? Well, every man had his enemies, deservedly or undeservedly, that was Mr. Dawkins's experience. And no doubt, from what Mr. Spreadberry had said, there might be some not unwilling to do Farmer Bickerstaff a bad turn, supposing an opportunity were offered them.

"You had an advantage, you see," Mr. Dawkins observed to the country constable, "in attending the inquest. As a general rule we don't think much of inquests; they're apt to be muddles, are inquests. The coroner don't know what to do, the

jury don't know what to say, and the witnesses don't know where they are. The right questions are not asked, the wrong questions are asked, and the evidence isn't what is wanted. No; give me a police-court. I may be thought prejudiced, perhaps, but to my thinking there's nothing like a police-court. I prefer a police-court, if you'll believe me, even to the Central Criminal; though, mind you, there have been some fine things done at the Central Criminal. Now at this inquest at The King's Head it came out that Jacob Haggard was the first to find the body at, it might be, eleven o'clock, he says, or perhaps a little before. Well, I have nothing to say against Jacob Haggard. But it did not come out at the inquest who it was that was the last to see Farmer Bickerstaff alive?"

"As a matter of fact," Mr. Spreadberry explained, "it was Jacob's mother, old Keziah Haggard, who was the last to see the farmer alive. She was at what we call the toll-gate cottage in the Steepleborough road. He had stopped at the cottage to ask for a drink; it was before ten by her clock, she says. She wasn't called at the inquest; she's old, crippled with the rheumatism, and terribly hard of hearing. She's pretty nearly past work, but she won't go into the House. She does a bit of washing and mending for folks now and then, and she's equal to a bit of field labour at times. It's not so long since I saw her hoeing turnips on the uplands over against the Abbey farmhouse."

"I've seen Mrs. Keziah Haggard," Mr. Dawkins admitted. "Nice tidy old body; well-spoken woman; I had an aunt once who was the very moral of her. Rather a nut-cracker order of face, but been good-looking in her younger days, dear old soul, I shouldn't wonder. Dropped into her cottage, quite by chance, as it were, and sat by the fireside, it might be, for half an hour, while the bacon and greens was a boiling; uncommon good to eat, I dare say, but strong-smelling all the same; and we talked over the case of Farmer Bickerstaff. She says there was a gun fired that night in the abbey preserves. She was standing at her door looking down the road for Jacob, and, deaf as she is, she heard the report, she tells me, plain as plain."

"She's quite right. There was a gun fired. The keepers all heard it. A bit of poaching, they suppose, but they weren't clear about it. But it couldn't have

anything to do with Farmer Bickerstaff's death."

"I suppose not. Yet Keziah Haggard thought it worth while to mention it. She was right, I dare say. It was odd that a gun should be fired just about the time the farmer met with his death. There might be no connection between the two incidents, and yet they might be connected. Did she wish us to think they were connected? Mind, I don't say she did. The farmer did not die of a gun-shot wound. Yet he might have been fired at before his head was beaten in. It's curious when you come to think of it, although I don't say that there is really anything in it, still it's curious that the first person to see the farmer dead should be Jacob Haggard, and the last person to see him alive Keziah Haggard—mother and son. It looks almost like a family arrangement."

Mr. Spreadberry shook his head. The Haggards could have had no motive for murdering the farmer.

"It's very well to look for a motive," said Mr. Dawkins; "but a motive isn't everything. Sometimes great crimes are committed for very small motives. And sometimes a murder's committed with a certain object, which is abandoned through fear, or nervousness, or confusion, or interruption, or what not, at the last moment."

"The motive wasn't robbery at any rate," observed Mr. Spreadberry.

"Are you sure? You mean that money was found in his pockets? But was it proved that all the money was found upon him that he was bringing home from the market? I don't think that came out at the inquest. And if there was no robbery it doesn't follow that the man wasn't murdered with a design to rob him—a design abandoned after the murder; for you know murder is an upsetting sort of thing to the murderer, who isn't generally a very courageous sort of person."

Mr. Spreadberry shook his head again. He thought that, as a rule, murder was rather more upsetting to the murdered than to the murderer. He could not believe in the guilt of the Haggards. "It was not likely," he said.

"We have to consider first what is possible; we shall get in that way at what is likely," said Mr. Dawkins. "But, mind you, I am not suspecting, still less accusing, this old woman and her son. Only we can't leave them altogether out of the

calculation. They may be but small figures in the sum, of trifling account enough, but they need to be added in. And then," he added suddenly, "there's Mr. Stephen Lambert, of Bostock Farm. I wonder why he wasn't called at the inquest?"

"Mr. Stephen Lambert! What could he know about it?"

"Well, it didn't come out at the inquest, yet, you know, it's rather curious when you come to think of it: young Mr. Stephen Lambert had words with Mr. Bickerstaff in Steepleborough market-place only a few hours before Mr. Bickerstaff was found dead on the down. And they tell me that Mr. Bickerstaff lost his temper, and even went so far as to strike Mr. Stephen Lambert in the face. And then it's odd too, when you come to think about it, that Mr. Stephen Lambert's way home to Bostock was Mr. Bickerstaff's way home to the Abbey Farm, only, of course, Bostock's a mile or two farther on over the hill. It's clear that Mr. Stephen Lambert rode along the bridle-path, and passed the heap of flints but a little while before Mr. Bickerstaff was found there with his head battered in, dead as a door-nail."

It was clear from Mr. Spreadberry's manner that he held it waste of time to suspect Mr. Stephen Lambert. Decidedly Mr. Spreadberry was of opinion that Mr. Dawkins's reputation for cleverness was in excess of his merits, that he was indeed too clever by half.

"And now I think I'll take a little rural walk," said Mr. Dawkins, "and I shouldn't wonder if I found myself near the toll-gate cottage; I may even step in and have another little gossip with Mrs. Keziah Haggard while she boils her bacon and greens or what not. She is a pleasant old soul to talk to is old Mrs. Haggard, and knows a deal about the neighbourhood. From her cottage window she can see everyone that passes up or down the Steepleborough road; and people are apt to look in as they pass, and to tell her any bit of news that's stirring. Perhaps—who knows?—Jacob Haggard may give his mother a look in—for his dinner, I shouldn't wonder—and I may have a pleasant bit of chat with him too; not that Jacob has anything like what I may call the conversational powers of his mother, nor her good temper."

"He's shy, is Jacob, and not one to talk much," explained Mr. Spreadberry; "but there's no harm in Jacob, not a morsel."

"That's as it may be," observed the London policeman. "To my thinking there's harm in every man, and you're sure to find it, if you only know when and where to look for it."

IV.

For some time Mr. Dawkins may be said to have pervaded and possessed the Purrington district generally. He was constantly to be found sitting on stiles or leaning over gates, much interested in agricultural pursuits, watching the field-labourers, talking to them, examining the various instruments and machines employed in farming operations. He visited various of the cottages upon the Abbey Farm, and was often found conversing with old Keziah Haggard at the old toll-gate. And many a pipe he smoked with Mr. Spreadberry at his lodgings, refreshing himself there with many a tumbler of whisky-and-water, cold.

Soon Purrington and its neighbourhood had new cause for excitement and amazement. It was known that Mr. Dawkins had applied for a warrant for the arrest of young Mr. Stephen Lambert of Bostock Farm, charged with the wilful murder of Farmer Bickerstaff.

In Mr. Spreadberry's opinion Mr. Dawkins was quite mad to think of taking such a step.

V.

There was a very full attendance of magistrates, who it was clear heard the case with some reluctance, and whose sympathies were entirely with the accused. It was understood to be a Government prosecution, however; counsel had come down from London to conduct the charge and secure the committal for trial of Mr. Stephen Lambert. Mr. Biffin of the Old Bailey appeared in almost all Government prosecutions. It was admitted that the case was at present one of strong suspicion only, dependent entirely upon circumstantial evidence.

Mr. Stephen Lambert was a young man enjoying an excellent reputation. He had succeeded his father as tenant of Bostock Farm. There was nothing to be said against his private character. He was thought to be decidedly steady, and clever as a farmer, and was supposed to have made money by his industry and enterprise. He was at work early and late upon his

farm; he was an excellent flock-master, and had been successful with his sheep when others had been most unfortunate. It might be good luck or it might be good management; but there the fact was.

Stephen Lambert was a handsome-looking young man of some six-and-twenty years or so. He looked pale and anxious when brought before the magistrates, it was thought, and his manner was certainly agitated. But that was only natural, the very serious nature of the charge brought against him being considered. He was defended by Mr. Ritson, the well-known Steepleborough solicitor.

What was the evidence against Stephen Lambert? Mr. Ritson was eager to pooh-pooh it even before it was forthcoming, and dropped hints about a malicious prosecution and a trumped-up case.

Mr. Biffin, after a brief address to the bench, called witnesses to show that there had been for some time ill-blood between the deceased and the accused; that they were not on speaking terms; that they had quarrelled, and that Stephen Lambert had been forbidden to show himself at the Abbey Farm. This was a matter that was well known in the neighbourhood. Stephen Lambert had been a suitor for the hand of Rachel, the youngest and only surviving daughter of Farmer Bickerstaff. The young people, Mr. Biffin informed the bench, had come to an understanding with each other, but the deceased had strenuously opposed their union. He could not spare his daughter, he had been heard to say, and he did not think Stephen Lambert good enough for her. Farmer Bickerstaff had been a widower many years, and his daughter Rachel kept house for him.

Certain of the neighbouring farmers were called to describe the altercation in Steepleborough market-place between the accused and the deceased, which occurred in the morning of the day on which late at night the body of the farmer was discovered some mile or two away from his farm.

"It was the affair of a moment," said the witnesses. "Farmer Bickerstaff was flushed and angry; he had been drinking; and he could not get the price he wanted for some barley he was offering for sale. He held a sample of it in his hand, when turning sharply to the right he struck against the accused, who chanced to be standing by, and the sample was upset, the corn being scattered over the floor of the

market-place. The farmer quite lost his temper, and swore loudly. 'Clumsy clown, you are always in the way,' he said to the accused. 'Clumsy yourself, Mr. Bickerstaff,' Stephen Lambert answered. Thereupon Farmer Bickerstaff struck him on the mouth sharply so as to make his lip bleed. Mr. Lambert raised his hand as though about to return the blow, then suddenly checked himself, and stepped back a pace or two. 'You'll be sorry for this treatment of me some day,' said Mr. Lambert. And that was all."

"Did you understand him to say that as a threat?" asked Mr. Biffin.

"I didn't understand it at all," answered the witness. "I don't understand a man's receiving a blow and not hitting back again."

Mr. Lambert complained bitterly to certain of his friends of the treatment he had experienced at the hands of Farmer Bickerstaff. It was shameful, it was cruel, it was most insulting, it was more than he could bear, he had been heard to say. There were limits to his forbearance; Farmer Bickerstaff had better not try it on again; there were things no man could bear twice. He had never been so tried before. And to think that such a thing should happen in the sight of the whole market! It was evident that he was extremely agitated and distressed. He had expressed an intention of speaking to Farmer Bickerstaff, of expostulating with him, and demanding some apology from him. He had remained in Steepleborough presumably with this intention, when, as though tired of waiting, he had rather suddenly mounted his horse and departed on his way home. Meanwhile the deceased had been smoking, drinking, and playing cards at the club-house. It was six o'clock when Stephen Lambert left Steepleborough to ride back to Bostock. At what time did he reach home? It was odd: according to the evidence of his own servants he did not arrive home until nearly eleven o'clock. His own groom stated that it was about that time when he took his master's horse to the stable. Mr. Lambert did not say a word to him as to its being late, or as to where he had been.

Where, indeed, had Mr. Stephen Lambert been between six and eleven? Lying in wait to murder, and afterwards murdering Mr. Bickerstaff, suggested Mr. Biffin. Mr. Ritson quietly intimated that he had a complete answer to that portion of the case.

The evidence adduced at the inquest was forthcoming anew. The doctors reappeared in the witness-box, described again the condition of the deceased's body, the wounds he had received, and were still reluctant to state distinctly their opinion as to the cause of death. Jacob Haggard recounted his story of the finding of the body, and his fellow-labourers stated how, upon the summons of Jacob, they made ready a farm-cart, and conveyed the dead man home to his farm.

Mrs. Keziah Haggard, the mother of Jacob, was a new witness—a sun-burnt, weather-beaten old countrywoman, with an abundant cap-frill shadowing her tanned and wrinkled face. She had shapely features, keen sparkling eyes, with thick iron-grey hair neatly braided; her voice was firm and strong, and her manner was energetic. She was sixty-five, she said, but she was crippled with rheumatism and "hard of hearing." Her gnarled brown hand was constantly raised and curled round her ear, after the manner usually adopted by the deaf, and she certainly looked older than she professed to be. A peasant's life, however, with its exposure to sun and wind, its hard labour in the open fields, brings about a certain premature aspect of age. She was rather a picturesque-looking old woman in her tidy print dress, with a red-and-white spotted cotton handkerchief neatly folded and pinned shawl-wise across her shoulders.

She had lived many years at the toll-gate cottage. She was born in those parts. She had often worked on the Abbey Farm. She remembered the night when Mr. Bickerstaff was found dead upon the down. It was dark, but she had been standing at her door expecting her son to come down, when she saw some one on horse-back coming along the road. As he drew near he called out to her, but she couldn't make out "for sartin" what he said. He stopped at the cottage-door, and said he was "main drouthy." He asked for a drink. She had nothing in the house but some small-beer. He had been drinking, he was a bit muddled, but he could sit upright on his horse. He could always do that, she thought, however much he might have been drinking. Had often seen him come home from market the worse for drink. He seemed terrible cross. He had always been a "rudderish" kind of man. He was given to swearing, and he swore at her that night. She brought him out a "dubbin o' drenk"—a mug of beer. He drank some; then

he said it was "main hash," and he threw the rest away. The beer might have been a bit sour. He was in a temper. He swore at her again, and called her evil names. She had often before seen him "in a pelt," and she didn't heed his "saace." He struck his nag a good "powl" on the head, and then he rode off. She didn't see him again alive. When she heard from her son of what had happened, she crawled out and saw the dead body in the cart.

It was between nine and ten when Farmer Bickerstaff stopped at her door. It was soon after he had gone that she had heard the report of a gun. Did not think much about it; thought it might be poachers or the keepers. Many passed her cottage on market nights on their way home to Purrington, and the villages beyond. Few turned off by the bridle path. Who had gone that way before Farmer Bickerstaff? Mr. Stephen Lambert. What time was it when he passed the toll-gate cottage? It had gone nine. He had stopped for a minute and spoken to her. He looked pale and seemed in a to-do. He asked if Mr. Bickerstaff had passed yet. She said no. He said that he had missed Mr. Bickerstaff; that he had a word to say to Mr. Bickerstaff. He added that he was in good time then. Witness did not clearly understand him. Did he say anything more? Yes; he asked if the witness had seen anything of Miss Rachel Bickerstaff. It was true that Miss Bickerstaff often came to the toll-gate cottage. She was a sweet and kind young lady, and had been very good to the witness, who understood that Mr. Stephen Lambert and Miss Rachel were a-courting. They had sometimes met, by appointment as she thought, at her cottage.

Asked if she had heard any cries, or the noise of any conflict or struggle, after Farmer Bickerstaff had gone from her cottage-door, the witness answered that she thought once that she did hear voices talking at a little distance, but she could not be sure. Her hearing was bad; sometimes she fancied she heard things; at other times she could hear nothing at all. Her hearing was not worse that night than on other nights so far as she knew.

Mr. Biffin, the counsel for the prosecution, applied for a remand. That was all the evidence he could offer upon that occasion. Mr. Ritson, for the prisoner, opposed the application. There was really no evidence against the accused. The statements of the last witness amounted to nothing. The magistrates hesitated. They

were impressed by the fact that Mr. Biffin had come down expressly from London to prosecute. They had rarely been addressed by a barrister from the Central Criminal Court; they were disposed to think there must be a remand.

But of course they would hear any witnesses that Mr. Ritson might choose to call.

"Call Miss Bickerstaff," said Mr. Ritson promptly.

There was some commotion in the court-house upon the entrance of Miss Rachel Bickerstaff. She was dressed in deep mourning for her father; her face was very pallid, and she advanced with trembling steps. It could be seen, however, that she possessed rare beauty of the Saxon type—profuse light-brown hair, large limpid blue eyes, and a fair clear complexion. She was tall, graceful of movement, with a figure of noble proportions. She spoke in subdued tones, but with musical distinctness.

Mr. Ritson stated that he had but one or two questions to ask.

She was the only daughter of Mr. Bickerstaff. She remembered the night of her father's death. She had been at home the whole evening. She had been sitting in the drawing-room. She had not been alone. Who had been with her between seven o'clock and half-past ten or a quarter to eleven? Mr. Stephen Lambert. She was quite certain about the time? She was quite certain.

Mr. Ritson asked whether, in the face of Miss Bickerstaff's evidence, the magistrates would keep the accused any longer in custody. But Mr. Biffin had a question or two to ask.

The accused had been forbidden Mr. Bickerstaff's house. There had been a quarrel between Mr. Bickerstaff and the prisoner. Mr. Biffin did not wish to give pain, but he supposed he might take it, as a matter of fact, that any visits paid by the prisoner to the Abbey Farm after that quarrel had been of a clandestine sort? The witness admitted as much. On the night in question, then, the prisoner's visit was clandestine? His presence in the house was unknown to the servants? He entered by the garden. The drawing-room windows opened on to the lawn. He had paid many such visits. He had been accustomed to tie up his horse in the orchard, and then to steal through the garden to the house, remaining there some hours.

"He came, then, in point of fact, as your lover?" said Mr. Biffin with some insolence of manner.

"God forgive me!" cried the witness, bursting into tears; "he came as my husband—my own true, lawful husband! Gentlemen, he did not do this thing; he is incapable of it. You heard how, when he was struck in the open market-place, he would not strike back again. And why? Because it was my father who struck him, and because he is my husband, and he loves me. Speak to me, Stephen. Gentlemen, indeed, indeed he is innocent. How can he be guilty? He was with me—I swear it—at the time this murder was committed. I loved my father dearly. He had his faults, but it is not for his child to take count of them, least of all at such a time as this. I would not screen his murderer. Stephen is not his murderer. My husband was with me alone at the farm at the time they charge him with committing this dreadful crime."

"Do you mean, Miss Bickerstaff, that the prisoner is really your husband?" asked the senior magistrate.

She took from her bosom a folded paper and handed it to the bench. She then staggered, and uttering a feeble moan, fainted away. The paper certified that at a London parish church, some few months back, Rachel Bickerstaff had become the wife of Stephen Lambert.

"It is clear that we cannot listen to this witness," said the senior magistrate. "She can neither give evidence for or against the prisoner. She is his wife."

"I own myself taken by surprise," observed Mr. Ritson.

Mr. Biffin wore something of an air of triumph.

The prisoner was remanded.

"You don't really think as he's guilty?" said Mr. Spreadberry to Mr. Dawkins as they left the court-house together.

"If you put it to me point-blank," confessed Mr. Dawkins, "I don't think he is."

"There's almost as much of a case against old Keziah Haggard."

"Oh, you've come to that way of thinking, have you? But just look here. By charging young Lambert with the murder, we get Mrs. Haggard to open her mouth as a witness, and that's just what we wanted. Now, if we'd charged Keziah Haggard, we should have simply shut her mouth, and that wouldn't have done at all. It was particularly necessary that she

should tell her story in her own way. Sometimes, but not always, it's a good plan to give a woman her head, and let her run on till she's tired. It takes time, no doubt, but it has its advantages all the same."

VI.

Old Keziah Haggard was sitting over her fire rocking herself to and fro. She wore her red-worsted shawl over her head, and she shivered from time to time. She was pale, the light had gone from her eyes, and she seemed altogether weak, ill, and suffering. She explained as she coughed and struck herself upon the chest, that it was "along of going avore the magistrates;" she had "taken a chill, and it had pitched."

"You're a very wicked woman, Keziah," said Rachel, Farmer Bickerstaff's daughter, as she entered the toll-gate cottage.

"May be," asserted Keziah. "We're all wicked at times. No one knows it better than I do. I am a sinful old woman. There, I own it; a sinful and a sad. But, God knows, I'm sick and sorry too. And this cough's worrying me into my grave. And the sooner the better perhaps. The grave's the only place for a poor old woman like me. One's out of harm's way in the grave."

"You didn't tell the truth to the magistrates about my husband."

"Did I know he was your husband? God knows I didn't. To think of your having a husband. My poor Miss Rachel, I've known you ever since you were born, and loved you dearly, my lamb, if I may say so. I wouldn't have spoken a word against your husband if I had only known he was your husband. I thought you liked him, and he's a fine sprack young man is Stephen Lambert; but I never reckoned as you'd married him. May be I was wrong, or my clock wasn't going. May be he passed hours before your father, and could have had no hand in killing him. But it wasn't much I said; and they lawyers do worry a body so, one can't be sure what one says. But I didn't say enough to hang him? You don't think that of me, Miss Rachel? They'll never hang the poor young man."

"You're a very wicked woman," Rachel repeated, "and to the last day I live I'll not forgive you. I hate you, Keziah, I hate you!"

"Don'tee say that of me, Miss Rachel, don'tee now. I didn't mean to harm the

young man; I didn't indeed. It was to save myself I spoke."

"To save yourself, Keziah?"

"One has to think of oneself, you know, Miss Rachel; and that lawyer chap was trying to wind a net round me, he was; and that policeman from London, what they call a detective, if you please, Miss Rachel, he's been sneaking and speering about the place seeking to catch me tripping, the villain. Would you mind giving me some of that cough-mixture yonder, Miss Rachel, in the bottle on the chimley-piece? There's 'loddy' in it, they tell me, and it's wonderful soothing to the chest. Thank you kindly, Miss Rachel. Not that it matters much what happens to a poor body like me—old and wore out, and well-nigh bent double. Still, one doesn't want to be hanged, however old and wore out one may be."

"What do you mean, Keziah? Who's been talking of hanging you?"

"Murder's a hanging matter, you know, Miss Rachel. If they were to bring it in as I'd murdered him, they'd hang me, sure as sure."

"Murdered him? Murdered whom? What! Do you mean that you murdered my father?"

"No, miss. Don'tee now—don'tee take on so. 'Twasn't I as murdered him; not to say murdered him. Though God knows he had given me cause to wish him dead times and times."

"What do you mean, Keziah? Are you dreaming? Rouse yourself, woman. Speak. What harm had my father ever done to you that you should wish him dead?"

"Don'tee scold me, Miss Rachel. It's the 'loddy' in that cough-mixture as makes me so drowsy, I'm thinking. I've been taking of it, off and on, all day long, and it's done me a power of good. Yet it's wonderful deadening too. It works like a charm. I seem quieted off to sleep like a babe in arms."

"What cause had my father given you to wish him dead?" Rachel repeated fiercely.

"I hated the master. I've hated the master this many a long year," the woman murmured in somnolent tones, as though hardly conscious of what she said or to whom she was saying it. "Why did I hate him? He did me the cruellest wrong that man could do to woman. It is an old story now. Of course, of course. But it's not the story as a woman ever forgets

or can ever forgive. But what did he care whether I ever forgot or forgave? He was insolent and tyrannical, wicked and cruel to the last. He'd a bad black heart of his own. I wrong him? My dear, I knew your father before you did years and years. I know him better than you do. He'd a lying tongue and a bad black heart, for all his good looks and his fine words. Don't tell me I wrong him. Who should know him if I don't? He's my boy Jacob's father, worst luck. It's all four-and-forty years ago, or more, but I feel the shame on it still. My face burns, my blood tingles, and my fingers grip when I think on it. It was your father as brought disgrace upon me, and taught me deceit, and put wickedness into my heart; and then he'd have left me to rot and starve, to die in a ditch—he didn't care where, he has said as much times and times. But I lived. The thought that some day I'd be even with him kept me from dying, I think. Else, God knows I've had reason enough to die a many times over. The chance was long a-coming, but it came at last. And when I saw him tumble head-long from his horse, pitched face forward on to those flints, I saw that God had given him into my hands! He didn't move; but he was breathing still. I took my hammer down from my shelf, and I went and finished him. I went on beating at his head until he seemed to be stone-killed, past praying for. Then I left him. I hid the hammer in the thatch over the doorway. It's there now. I didn't rob him. I thought of robbing him, but I put the thought away from me. I couldn't stoop to robbing him."

"You had murdered him, wretch!" cried Rachel.

"Not to say murdered him, my dear. Maybe if I had never struck a blow he'd never have stood again. He seemed nigh dead before ever I touched him. But seeing him down helpless and senseless—him as I had known so fierce, and proud, and strong, and cruel, I felt as the chance I had waited for so long and prayed for had come at last, and I couldn't help it. I struck at him hard as might be, until I knew as his skull was beaten in by my blows. And I laughed as I struck him to think he was in my power, poor helpless old woman as he thought me, and it was my turn to be wicked and merciless with him as he had been with me. The debt I owed him was an old debt forty-four years or more; but

'twas paid at last. We were quits—me and Farmer Bickerstaff."

"My poor father," moaned Rachel, and aghast she stepped back some paces gazing with terrified eyes at the murderess.

"A kind word would have turned me, maybe," continued the old woman. "I don't say as I'd have forgiven him; but I wouldn't have struck at him not so hard. I wouldn't. If he'd only been a bit civil to me, I wouldn't have done it. At least I don't think as I'd have done it. But he come in in his old bullying driving way. He got down from his horse. I didn't tell the lawyer chap that, but it's true. He was his own bad self, wicked self, all over. He swore, and slashed about the cottage with his whip; he pretty nigh killed my poor cat there, that had never done him no harm whatsoever; and when he found as the small beer wasn't to his liking, and 'twas a bit 'motherly' I own, he chucked it in my face. That was your father, Miss Rachel; that was Farmer Bickerstaff. And when I told him how poor I was, how I'd need of this and that, he called me names, and bade me go to the workhouse. Me! the mother of his son; for Jacob's his own son, though he'd never give the lad ever so little of a helping hand or a civil word. He's a good lad though dull, and he works hard, and I've done my duty to him, let who will say I haven't. He knows nought of what I've told you, miss, and if you'll

kindly believe me, I've never spoken in Jacob's hearing a word against the man that was his father. I've never let out to the lad who his father was, nor the manner of man he was, nor how cruel bad he has been from first to last. I've been true and faithful so far. I've kept my shame and sorrow to myself. But it's all over now."

"Very nearly so," said some one, entering the cottage suddenly. "About as pretty a confession of a crime as I think I ever listened to, or had the pleasure of taking down in writing. Easy does it, my dear. That's right. Now we are all tidy and comfortable. I've the warrant in my pocket, and we shall soon be having a pleasant little ride together in a tax-cart to Salisbury Gaol."

As he spoke Mr. Dawkins slipped a pair of handcuffs over Keziah Haggard's wrists.

She stared at him wildly, uttered a strange scream, threw up her fettered arms, tottered a few paces, and then fell heavily in a disordered heap at his feet.

She never moved or spoke again. But she had furnished an explanation of the Purrington Tragedy. There was now a very complete answer to the charge against Stephen Lambert. Mr. Spreadberry, however, was never quite clear in his own mind as to how far Mr. Dawkins's success in dealing with the case was due to his own skill, or how much might be attributed to mere accident.

The Right of Translating any of the Articles contained in this Number is reserved by the Authors.

Now Publishing in the Current Number of ALL THE YEAR ROUND (Commenced May 26),

JENIFER,

A NEW SERIAL STORY BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

In Preparation,

AN ALIBI AND ITS PRICE,

A SHORT STORY BY THEO GIFT,

AND

A DRAWN GAME,

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT."





IMPORTANT FAMILY MEDICINE.

TRADE



MARK.

CAMOMILE PILLS,

THE

MOST CERTAIN PRESERVER OF HEALTH,

A MILD, YET SPEEDY, SAFE, AND

EFFECTUAL AID IN CASES OF INDIGESTION

AND ALL STOMACH COMPLAINTS,

AND, AS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE,

PURIFIER OF THE BLOOD AND SWEETENER OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

INDIGESTION is a weakness or want of power of the digestive juices in the stomach to convert what we eat and drink into healthy matter for the proper nourishment of the whole system. It is caused by everything which weakens the system in general, or the stomach in particular. From it proceed nearly all the diseases to which we are liable; for it is very certain that if we could always keep the stomach right we should only die by old age or accident. Indigestion produces a great variety of unpleasant sensations; amongst the most prominent of its miserable effects are a want of, or an inordinate appetite, sometimes attended with a constant craving for drink, a distension or feeling of enlargement of the stomach, flatulency, heartburn, pain in the stomach, acidity, unpleasant taste in the mouth, perhaps sickness, rumbling noise in the bowels; in some cases of depraved digestion there is nearly a complete disrelish for food, but still the appetite is not greatly impaired, as at the stated period of meals persons so afflicted can eat heartily, although without much gratification; a long train of nervous symptoms are also frequent attendants, general debility, great languidness, and incapacity for exertion. The minds of persons so afflicted frequently become irritable and desponding, and great anxiety is observable in the countenance; they appear thoughtful, melancholy, and dejected, under great apprehension of some imaginary danger, will start at any unexpected noise or occurrence, and become so agitated that they require some time to calm and collect themselves; yet for all this the mind is exhilarated

without much difficulty; pleasing events, society, will for a time dissipate all appearance of disease; but the excitement produced by an agreeable change vanishes soon after the cause has gone by. Other symptoms are, violent palpitations, restlessness, the sleep disturbed by frightful dreams and startings, and affording little or no refreshment; occasionally there is much moaning, with a sense of weight and oppression upon the chest, nightmare, &c.

It is almost impossible to enumerate all the symptoms of this first invader upon the constitution, as in a hundred cases of *Indigestion* there will probably be something peculiar to each; but be they what they may, they are all occasioned by the food becoming a burden rather than a support to the stomach; and in all its stages the medicine most wanted is that which will afford speedy and effectual assistance to the digestive organs, and give energy to the nervous and muscular systems—nothing can more speedily, or with more certainty, effect so desirable an object than *Norton's Extract of Camomile Flowers*. The herb has from time immemorial been highly esteemed in England as a grateful anodyne, imparting an aromatic bitter to the taste and a pleasing degree of warmth and strength to the stomach; and in all cases of indigestion, gout in the stomach, windy colic, and general weakness, it has for ages been strongly recommended by the most eminent practitioners as very useful and beneficial. The great, indeed only, objection to its use has been the large quantity of water which it takes to dissolve a small part of the flowers and

which must be taken with it into the stomach. It requires a **quarter of a pint** of boiling water to dissolve the soluble portion of one drachm of **Camomile Flowers**; and when one or even two ounces may be taken with advantage, it must at once be seen how impossible it is to take a proper dose of this wholesome herb in the form of tea; and the only reason why it has not long since been placed the very first in rank of all restorative medicines is, that in taking it the stomach has always been loaded with water, which tends in a great measure to counteract, and very frequently wholly to destroy, the effect. It must be evident that loading a weak stomach with a large quantity of water, merely for the purpose of conveying into it a small quantity of medicine, must be injurious; and that the medicine must possess powerful renovating properties only to counteract the bad effects likely to be produced by the water. Generally speaking, this has been the case with **Camomile Flowers**, a herb possessing the highest restorative qualities, and when properly taken, decidedly the most speedy restorer, and the most certain preserver of health.

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS are prepared by a peculiar process, accidentally discovered, and known only to the proprietor, and which he firmly believes to be one of the most valuable modern discoveries in medicine, by which all the essential and extractive matter of more than an ounce of the flowers is concentrated in four moderate-sized pills. Experience has afforded the most ample proof that they possess all the fine aromatic and stomachic properties for which the herb has been esteemed; and, as they are taken into the stomach unencumbered by any diluting or indigestible substance, in the same degree has their benefit been more immediate and decided. Mild in their operation and pleasant in their effect, they may be taken at any age, and under any circumstances, without danger or inconvenience. A person exposed to cold and wet a whole day or night could not possibly receive any injury from taking them, but, on the contrary, they would effectually prevent a cold being taken. After a long acquaintance with and strict observance of the medicinal properties of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, it is only doing them justice to say, that they are really the most valuable of all **Tonic Medicines**. By the word tonic is meant a medicine

which gives strength to the stomach sufficient to digest in proper quantities all wholesome food, which increases the power of every nerve and muscle of the human body, or, in other words, invigorates the nervous and muscular systems. The solidity or firmness of the whole tissue of the body, which so quickly follows the use of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, their certain and speedy effect in repairing the partial dilapidations from time or intemperance, and their lasting salutary influence on the whole frame, is most convincing, that in the smallest compass is contained the largest quantity of the tonic principle, of so peculiar a nature as to pervade the whole system, through which it diffuses health and strength sufficient to resist the formation of disease, and also to fortify the constitution against contagion; as such their general use is strongly recommended as a preventative during the prevalence of malignant fever or other infectious diseases, and to persons attending sick-rooms they are invaluable, as in no one instance have they ever failed in preventing the taking of illness, even under the most trying circumstances.

As *Norton's Camomile Pills* are particularly recommended for all stomach complaints or indigestion, it will probably be expected that some advice should be given respecting diet, though after all that has been written upon the subject, after the publication of volume upon volume, after the country has, as it were, been inundated with practical essays on diet as a means of prolonging life, it would be unnecessary to say more, did we not feel it our duty to make the humble endeavour of inducing the public to regard them not, but to adopt that course which is dictated by nature, by reason, and by common sense. Those persons who study the wholesomes, and are governed by the opinion of writers on diet, are uniformly both unhealthy in body and weak in mind. There can be no doubt that the palate is designed to inform us what is proper for the stomach, and of course that must best instruct us what food to take and what to avoid; we want no other adviser. Nothing can be more clear than that those articles which are agreeable to the taste were by nature intended for our food and sustenance, whether liquid or solid, foreign or of native production; if they are pure and unadulterated, no harm need be dreaded by

their use; they will only injure by abuse. Consequently, whatever the palate approves, eat and drink always in moderation, but never in excess; keeping in mind that the first process of digestion is performed in the mouth, the second in the stomach; and that, in order that the stomach may be able to do its work properly, it is requisite the first process should be well performed; this consists in masticating or chewing the solid food, so as to break down and separate the fibres and small substances of meat and vegetable, mixing them well, and blending the whole together before they are swallowed; and it is particularly urged upon all to take plenty of time to their meals and never eat in haste. If you conform to this short and simple, but comprehensive advice, and find that there are various things which others eat and drink with pleasure and without inconvenience, and which would be pleasant to yourself only that they disagree, you may at once conclude that the fault is in the stomach, that it does not possess the power which it ought to do, that it wants assistance, and the sooner that assistance is afforded the better. A very short trial of this medicine will best prove how soon it will put the stomach in a condition to perform with ease all the work which nature intended for it. By its use you will soon be able to enjoy, in moderation, whatever is agreeable to the taste, and unable to name one individual article of food which disagrees with or sits unpleasantly on the stomach. Never forget that a small meal well digested affords more nourishment to the system than a large one, even of the same food, when digested imperfectly. Let the dish be ever so delicious, ever so enticing a variety offered, the bottle ever so enchanting, never forget that temperance tends to preserve health, and that health is the soul of enjoyment. But should an impropriety be at any time, or ever so often committed, by which the stomach becomes overloaded or disordered, render it immediate aid by taking a dose of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, which will so promptly assist in carrying off the bur-

den thus imposed upon it, that all will soon be right again.

It is most certainly true that every person in his lifetime consumes a quantity of noxious matter, which if taken at one meal would be fatal: it is these small quantities of noxious matter, which are introduced into our food, either by accident or wilful adulteration, which we find so often upset the stomach, and not unfrequently lay the foundation of illness, and perhaps final ruination to health. To preserve the constitution, it should be our constant care, if possible, to counteract the effect of these small quantities of unwholesome matter; and whenever, in that way, an enemy to the constitution finds its way into the stomach, a friend should immediately be sent after it, which would prevent its mischievous effects, and expel it altogether; no better friend can be found—no, none which will perform the task with greater certainty, than **NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS**. And let it be observed, that the longer this medicine is taken the less it will be wanted, and it can in no case become habitual, as its entire action is to give energy and force to the stomach, which is the spring of life, the source from which the whole frame draws its succour and support. After an excess of eating or drinking, and upon every occasion of the general health being at all disturbed, these **PILLS** should be immediately taken, as they will stop and eradicate disease at its commencement. Indeed, it is most confidently asserted that, by the timely use of this medicine only, and a common degree of caution, any person may enjoy all the comforts within his reach, may pass through life without an illness, and with the certainty of attaining a healthy **OLD AGE**.

On account of their volatile properties, they must be kept in bottles; and if closely corked their qualities are neither impaired by time nor injured by any change of climate whatever. Price 13½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions. The large bottle contains the quantity of three small ones, or **PILLS** equal to fourteen ounces of **CAMOMILE FLOWERS**.

Sold by nearly all respectable Medicine Vendors.

Be particular to ask for "**NORTON'S PILLS**," and do not be persuaded to purchase an imitation.

A CLEAR COMPLEXION!!!

GODFREY'S EXTRACT OF ELDER FLOWERS

IS strongly recommended for Softening, Improving, Beautifying, and Preserving the SKIN, and giving it a blooming and charming appearance. It will completely remove Tan, Sunburn, Redness, &c., and by its Balsamic and Healing qualities render the skin soft, pliable, and free from dryness, &c., clear it from every humour, pimple, or eruption; and by continuing its use only a short time, the skin will become and continue soft and smooth, and the complexion perfectly clear and beautiful.

Sold in Bottles, price 2s. 9d., by all Medicine Vendors and Perfumers.

STEEDMAN'S SOOTHING POWDERS FOR CHILDREN CUTTING TEETH.

THE value of this Medicine has been largely tested in all parts of the world and by all grades of society for upwards of fifty years.

Its extensive sale has induced spurious imitations, in some of which the outside Label and the coloured Paper enclosing the Packet of Powders so closely resemble the Original as to have deceived many Purchasers. The Proprietor therefore feels it due to the Public to give a special caution against such imitations.

All purchasers are therefore requested carefully to observe that the words "JOHN STEEDMAN, Chemist, Walworth, Surrey," are engraved on the Government Stamp affixed to each Packet, in White Letters on a Red Ground, without which none are genuine. The name STEEDMAN is spelt with *two EE's*.

**Prepared ONLY at Walworth, Surrey, and
Sold by all Chemists and Medicine Vendors,
in Packets, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. each.**

Liverpool & London & Globe Insurance Company

THE all-important consideration, both for persons already insured and those about to insure, is the Solvency and Security of the Company.

The amount of Funds held by this Company, together with the security of a large and wealthy Proprietary, point it out as amongst the most eligible of Offices in the United Kingdom.

No Policyholder, whether Fire or Life, is involved in the slightest liability of Partnership.

THE ACCOUNTS OF THE COMPANY ARE SUBJECTED TO TWO INDEPENDENT AUDITS.

The Income for 1882 was £1,877,749.

LIFE DEPARTMENT.

Life and Annuity Funds £3,422,078.

LIFE POLICIES are issued upon different scales of premium to meet special purposes—see Tables below and others in Company's Prospectus.

80 per cent. of the profits of their Class are divided amongst the Participating Assured.

The Valuation with a view to the Division of PROFITS is Quinquennial, and the next Report of BONUS ADDITIONS to the Sums Assured in the new participating class will be made for the term ending 31st December, 1883.

The large reversionary Bonus of 35s. per cent. per annum on the sums assured by Policies in that Class, was declared for the quinquennium ended December 1878.

POLICIES MAY BE EFFECTED TO BE MADE PAYABLE DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE ASSURED.

No entrance fee or other payment beyond the premium.

No extra premium charged to members of the Volunteer Artillery or Rifle Corps within the United Kingdom.

Surrenders of Policies favourably dealt with.

Liberal arrangements made with assurers intending to reside abroad or voyage to foreign countries.

Policies issued in accordance with *The Married Women's Property Act*, passed by Parliament in the year 1882, which gives power to a Married Woman to assure her Husband's life or her own, and to a Married Man to assure his own life for the special benefit of his wife, or wife and children; in all such cases the Policy being free from the control of the Husband, his representatives or creditors.

PREMIUM FOR THE WHOLE TERM OF LIFE TO SECURE £100 AT DEATH.

TABLE A. WITHOUT BONUS						TABLE B. WITH PARTICIPATION IN PROFITS					
Age next Birthday	PAYMENTS.		Age next Birthday	PAYMENTS.		Age next Birthday	PAYMENTS.		Age next Birthday	PAYMENTS.	
	Yearly.	Half-yearly		Yearly.	Half-yearly		Yearly.	Half-yearly		Yearly.	Half-yearly
20	£1 13 7	£0 17 4	45	£3 6 4	£1 14 2	20	£1 17 8	£0 19 6	45	£3 16 0	£1 19 2
25	1 17 8	0 19 5	50	3 19 8	2 1 0	25	2 2 11	1 2 2	50	4 11 3	2 7 0
30	2 2 6	1 1 11	55	4 17 5	2 10 2	30	2 9 3	1 5 5	55	5 14 8	2 19 0
35	2 8 6	1 5 0	60	6 1 6	3 2 9	35	2 16 3	1 9 0	60	7 5 11	3 15 4
40	2 16 3	1 9 0	65	7 14 8	4 0 2	40	3 5 6	1 13 9	65	9 0 9	4 13 8

ANNUITIES granted on favourable terms. No expense beyond the purchase money.

FIRE DEPARTMENT.

General Reserve and Fire Re-Insurance Fund - £1,500,000.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE COMPANY'S BUSINESS enables it to accept Fire risks upon the most favourable terms, the same being rated according to the nature of the risk to be insured.

Some risks of a special and complicated nature, such as Mills, to ensure fair and equitable rating, are rated according to Tariffs carefully compiled by the Offices, and revised from time to time to meet the altered circumstances affecting any particular class.

The majority of risks, however, are subject to no tariff, but are rated by this Company according to their individual merits, based upon the law of average—the principle upon which Insurance Companies are founded. By this law the Company, owing to the large number of risks on its books, is enabled to insure the different classes at their minimum rates. An individual is therefore imprudent to run his own risk when the Company can relieve him of the danger of loss at the smallest possible cost.

Head Offices—DALE STREET, LIVERPOOL; CORNHILL, LONDON.

Branch Offices—MANCHESTER, LEEDS, BRISTOL, DUBLIN, GLASGOW, EDINBURGH, BIRMINGHAM, and NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

Prospectuses and Forms of Proposal for Fire, Life, or Annuities may be obtained at the Company's Offices, or of any Agents of the Company.

APPLICATIONS FOR AGENCIES INVITED.

Established 1836.

LIVERPOOL & LONDON & GLOBE Insurance Company.



FIRE & LIFE
AND
ANNUITIES.

HEAD OFFICES
DALE ST. LIVERPOOL
& CORNHILL, LONDON.

THE FUNDS OF THE COMPANY
DURING THE LAST NINE YEARS
HAVE BEEN INCREASED BY
£2,246,753.

THE TOTAL FUNDS AMOUNT TO
£6,381,742.

TOTAL CLAIMS PAID
£18,708,111.



GOLD MEDAL

PARIS, 1878.



JOSEPH GILLOTT'S

CELEBRATED

STEEL PENS.

SOLD BY ALL DEALERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

Every Packet bears the fac-simile
Signature,

PULVERMACHER'S IMPROVED PATENT GALVANIC CHAIN BANDS, BELTS, ETC.

Approved by the Academy of Medicine of Paris, and other Medical Authorities in England and Abroad.

THESE HIGHLY-IMPROVED INVENTIONS render Electricity in a mild continuous form, perfectly self-applicable, and extremely efficacious, no shock or unpleasant sensation being experienced, it thus becomes a true fountain of health and vigour, speedily soothing agonising pains, reanimating torpid limbs, reviving the sluggish functions of life, and imparting the renewed energy and vitality to constitutions enfeebled by various influences. The daily increasing number of cures effected by PULVERMACHER'S MEDICO-GALVANIC SYSTEM in cases of

**Indigestion,
Liver Complaints,
Neuralgia,**

**Sciatica,
Deafness,
Loss of Voice,**

**Asthma,
Bronchitis,
Paralysis,**

**Epilepsy,
Rheumatism,
Constipation,**

**General Debility,
Female Complaints,
Functional Disorders, etc.,**

is proved by innumerable Testimonials both Medical and Private. These GALVANIC CHAIN BANDS, by supplying the electrical deficiency, constitute Nature's most congenial curative in the ailments referred to, thereby embodying a host of remedies in one. Thirty-five years' successful experience has proved the marvellous remedial powers of these appliances, even in cases defying ordinary treatment. MR. PULVERMACHER begs to draw attention to the opinions of competent medical and scientific authorities, including SIR C. LOCOCK, Bart., M.D., F.R.C.S.; SIR HENRY HOLLAND, Bart., M.D., F.R.C.S., and F.R.S.; SIR J. R. MARTIN, Bart., C.B., F.R.C.S., F.S.A., and F.R.S.; SIR W. FERGUSON, Bart., M.D., F.R.S., F.R.C.S., &c. &c., published in Pamphlet, "GALVANISM, NATURE'S CHIEF RESTORER OF IMPAIRED VITAL ENERGY."

SENT POST FREE ON APPLICATION TO

Mr. J. L. Pulvermacher, Galvanic Establishment, 194, Regent St., London, W.

Furnish your House or Apartments throughout

ON MOEDER'S HIRE SYSTEM.

The Original, Best, and most Liberal Cash Prices.

NO EXTRA CHARGE FOR TIME GIVEN.

Illustrated printed Catalogues, with full particulars of terms, Post Free.

F. MOEDER,

248, 249, 250, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD; & 19, 20, 21, MORWELL ST., W.

ESTABLISHED 1852.

FORESHADOWINGS.

Crown 8vo, cloth, price 5s.

FORESHADOWINGS. A Poem in Four Cantos. By CHARLES ROOM.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

"The theme is the fulfilment of prophecy, written in a sufficiently impressive Spenserian stanza, and exhibits much varied and discursive reading."

PUBLIC OPINION.

"An epic poem of no small merit. Mr. Room has written with some grace. All his verses will bear the rigorous test of scansion, and many of them are truly beautiful. Some of the comments on the tendency of modern science remind us a little of Cowper. It is a good sound volume of verse."

THE QUEEN.

"The lines are musical and well written."

JOHN BULL.

"Written with considerable poetical ability. It will well repay a careful perusal from beginning to end."

THE ROCK.

"Mr. Room has shown considerable skill in handling the poem."

London: ELLIOT STOCK, 62, Paternoster Row, E.C.

JOHN BRINSMEAD & SONS

FOR SALE, FOR
HIRE, and on the
THREE YEARS SYSTEM.
EVERY PIANO GUARANTEED
FOR FIVE YEARS.

PATENT SOSTENENTE

PIANOS

The Cross of the Legion
of Honour, 1878.
Royal Portuguese Order
of Knighthood, 1883.
ILLUSTRATED LISTS FREE.
Prices from 35 to 350 Guineas.

Have gained the GOLD MEDALS at all the recent International Exhibitions.
18, 20, & 22, Wigmore St., London, W., & the "BRINSMEAD WORKS," Grafton Rd., Kentish Town, N.W.
AND OF ALL THE PRINCIPAL MUSICSELLERS.

THE "Century" Cashmeres.



Registered] WRITE FOR PATTERNS TO [Trade Mark.
THE BRADFORD MANUFACTURING COMPANY,
BRADFORD, YORKSHIRE.
In writing, please mention this Magazine.

HOGES HOREHOUND HONEY

A PROMPT RELIEF FOR
COUGHS, SORE THROATS, SORE LUNGS,

"I consider your Hoge's Horehound Honey is the most wonderful remedy I have ever tried, possessing properties nothing short of marvellous for the cure of affections of the throat and chest. I shall never without a bottle of Hoge's Horehound Honey.

"MARIE ROZE."

IF YOUR CHEMIST DOES NOT KEEP IT IN STOCK
WE WILL SEND IT POST-PAID TO ANY ADDRESS
UPON RECEIPT OF THE PRICE IN STAMPS OR P.O.O.
Put up in 2s. 3d. and 1s. 1½d. Bottles.

WILLIAM HOGES & CO.
Leconfield Road, London, N.
OWNERS OF THE ONLY HOREHOUND APIARY.



SEDDON & WIER'S TEAS.

SAMPLES AND PRICE LISTS FREE.
1, Beer Lane, Great Tower Street,
LONDON, E.C.

Persons wishing to become Agents should apply immediately.

THE WONDERFUL VELVETEENS

FOR LADIES' DRESSES, TO BE HAD IN MANCHESTER.

LEWIS'S, in Market Street, MANCHESTER, are the Manufacturers of fine, first-class Velveteens, which are now known all over the world the "BON MARCHE" VELVETEENS. They are fast pile and fast dyed, and every inch is guaranteed. If a dress should wear badly or be in any respect faulty, LEWIS'S will give a new dress for nothing at all, and pay the full cost for making and trimming.
The price of these beautiful Velveteens in Black and all the most beautiful Colours now worn is 2s. a yard. This quality Velveteen is sold by the best Drapers at 3s. 6d., 4s. 6d. and 5s. 6d. a yard. The public, although they don't know it, have to pay two or three profits, the difference between the manufacturer's price and the price the consumer pays for Velveteens.
LEWIS'S, of Market Street, MANCHESTER, manufacture these Velveteens themselves, and sell them (or it might almost be said give them to the Public for 2s. a yard. LEWIS'S ask Ladies to write for Patterns of these extraordinary Velveteens. They will then be able to judge for themselves whether LEWIS'S, of Market Street, MANCHESTER, praise their Velveteens more than they deserve. Write for Patterns on an ordinary post-card. LEWIS'S pay Carriage on all Orders value 20s. and upwards, to all parts of the United Kingdom. When writing, please mention Magazine.

CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS, 24, GREAT NEW STREET, LONDON.

ONS'
D

e Legion
1878.
se Orde
1, 1883.
TS FREE
0 Guineas.
wn, N.W.

ND

OR
NGS,

ney is ti
ossessin
he cure
never

Roze."
STO
DDRES
OR P.O.O
es.

CO.
N.

APIARY.

R'S

REE.
reet,

diat

S

e world
be in at
is sold by
difference
give them
judge for
rus on an
ve mention